

# South Pacific Educators in Vision Impairment (SPEVI)

# 2025 Conference Book of Abstracts

## Theme: EmPOWERment through connection, inclusion and education

#### Dates: Monday 13th to Wednesday 15th January 2025

#### Location: University of Southern Queensland (UniSQ Brisbane), 293 Queen Street, Brisbane Queensland 4000

#### SPEVI Conference Organising Committee

Co-presidents and conference convenors: Phia Damsma & Melissa Fanshawe

Conference chair: Ben Clare

Conference program committee: Frances Gentle, Melissa Cain and Pranitha Moodley

Volunteer coordinators: Debra Goodsir & Kerri Weaver

Exhibitor Quiz coordinator: Lara Anderson

Voices of SPEVI: Sue Silveira and Carla Silveira

Committee members and organisers: Leanne Smith, Lynda Williams, Shiree Arrian, Stephen Belbin, Skye de Vent, Laura Peronace-Garcia.

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Our Master of Disability Studies program, delivered in affiliation with Macquarie University, offers advanced professionals the preparation required to qualify as a Teacher of the Deaf, a teacher of students who are blind or have low vision, or a professional working with people with sensory disability. And through our research arm, NextSense Institute, we also offer continuing professional education, postgraduate degree and research programs for professionals who support people who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind or have low vision.

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At **NextSense**, we believe that everyone should have the power to reach their potential. That’s why we’ve been supporting people who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind or have low vision for more than 160 years. A not-for profit organisation, we are Australia’s largest non-government provider of health, disability, education and cochlear implant services for children and adults with vision and hearing loss, their families, and the professionals who support them.

### Humanware



**Inspirational vision**

For nearly 35 years, HumanWare’s inspirational vision has resulted in the development of more than 50 highly intuitive and intelligent solutions that change the lives of people living with visual impairment and vision loss. To use at home, in the classroom or in the workplace, our technology has helped more than 1 million people worldwide to see things differently and live independently.

**Who we are**

Founded in 1988, HumanWare is a Canadian-based company part of the EssilorLuxottica group since 2013. Recognized as an industry leader, our mission is to develop solutions enabling people living with visual impairment and vision loss to develop their potential and maintain their autonomy. Through the dedication of our employees and partners in North America, the United Kingdom, Australia and a worldwide distribution network, we improve the quality of life for our customers by promoting literacy, inclusion, and accessibility.

**What we do**

Every day, our clients face new challenges that arise from living in a world designed for the sighted. We use our passion and talent to develop technological aids for our customers living with a visual impairment or vision loss and continually strive to set new standards in product innovation to design and manufacture solutions that help people see things differently and live independently.

### NV Access



**NV Access** is an Australian-based non-profit organisation dedicated to empowering people who are blind or have low vision through accessible technology. Our flagship product, the NonVisual Desktop Access (NVDA) Screen Reader, is a free and open-source software tool that enables blind and vision impaired individuals to navigate and use Windows computers via speech and Braille output. Constantly updated and supported by a dedicated global community of developers who are also users of the product themselves, NVDA removes barriers to education, employment, and social participation. By prioritising affordability,
multilingual support, and efficiency, NV Access ensures everyone can access the digital world on equal terms.

In the classroom, NVDA enables students with vision impairments to excel in mainstream educational settings. With support for common applications like Microsoft Office, web browsers, and other third party applications, NVDA allows students to access curriculum materials, conduct research, and collaborate with peers. NV Access also offers resources like training materials and technical support, ensuring individuals and organisations can maximise NVDA’s potential.

### Pentronics



**Pentronics** was founded in 1987 as an independent provider of service and support of adaptive technologies for the blind and vision impaired.

Pentronics is committed to braille as the medium of literacy for the blind and seeks to provide the best products available to achieve this. We have had a continuing association with Index Braille of Sweden since they produced their first braille embosser in the early 1980’s and are proud to have been appointed as their Master Distributor for Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific.

Pentronics also represents SwellForm, (previously ZyFuse), tactile image products and the Eurobraille range of braille displays and notebooks.

Our unparalleled knowledge of braille devices, braille embossers and braille production makes us the best choice for the supply of your braille requirements.



At Guide Dogs Queensland, we provide vital services for people living with low vision or blindness, empowering them to achieve independence, participation, inclusion, and wellbeing. For over 60 Years, we have empowered people to find the solutions that will make the biggest differences, and we understand that no two journeys are the same. So, we work side-by-side with clients and their families to help them find their way with services tailored to suit them. We support people of all ages, with different levels of vision, providing a variety of services including Orientation and Mobility, Occupational Therapy, Counselling, Guide Dog Mobility, Assistive Technology, Leisure and Lifestyle Programs and more. To find out more about the services available, please visit our website at qld.guidedogs.com.au.

# Program at a Glance

## Day 1 – Monday 13th January 2025

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Time** |  |
| 8:15-9:00 | Registration |
| 9:00-11.00 | **Session 1 Inaugural Plenary,** **Ground Floor Auditorium**Welcome to Country, Roll CallKeynote Address: Ms Chantelle Griffiths |
| 10:30-11:00 | Morning Tea Break |
| 11:00-12.30Concurrent Sessions | **Session 2, Ground Floor Auditorium: Braille / Tactile Literacy**2a J. Minnis2b E. White2c F. Gentle & C. Cashmore | **Session 3, Level 6 Seminar Room 3: Parents and Caregivers**3a S. Silveira3b M. Carwardine3c S. Kuan Cheong | **Session 4, Zoom in online: Early Childhood and Inclusion**4a K. Leonida4b T. York4c S. Baguhn |
| 12:30-1:30 | Lunch break and visit exhibitors |
| 1:30-3:00 | **Ground Floor Auditorium**Panel Session 5: M. Cain, M. Whipp and Young AdultsPanel Session 6: M. Curran, D. Goodsir and Invited Guests |
| 3.00-3:30 | Afternoon Tea Break |
| 3:30-5.00 | **Session 7, Ground Floor Auditorium: Young People: Considerations**7a A. Abbracciavento7b K. Wallace7c L. Strickland | **Session 8, Level 6 Seminar Room 3: Workshops**8a L. Gower & P. Damsma8b M. Angelier, LEGO | **Session 9, Zoom in online: Braille / Tactile Literacy**9a R. Becker & T. Black9b A. Rose9c J. Jesso & A. Wilton |
| 5:00 | Close of Day 1 Program |

## Day 2 – Tuesday 14th January 2025

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| **Time** |  |
| 8:15-8:45 | Registration |
| 8:45-10.00 | **Session 10 Plenary,** **Ground Floor Auditorium**Keynote Address: Mr Michael Sheppard |
| 10:00-10:30 | Morning Tea Break |
| 10:30-12.00 | **Session 11, Ground Floor Auditorium: Cutting Edge Research** 11a J. L. Martire11b N. Kaine11c E. Sutherland | **Session 12, Level 6 Seminar Room 3: Sports and Physical Activity**12a F. Raphael, L. Arvier, E. Horriat & G. Comerford12b R. Hannen-Williams12c E. Beckman & S. Tweedy | **Session 13, Zoom in online: Innovative Approaches**13a M. Lau13b D. Robinson13c C. Bawden & K. Rattray |
| 12:00-1:00 | Lunch break and visit exhibitors **Session 14 LIVES meeting, Level 6 Meeting Room** |
| 1:00-2.30 | **Session 15, Ground Floor Auditorium:****Art and Life Ready Games**15a L. Strickland15b D. Zuvela15c L. Anderson | **Session 16, Level 6 Seminar Room 3:****Workshops**16a M. Oddoux & M. Angelier, LEGO16b (online) E. Babanisi & E. Vakabu | **Session 17, Ground floor:****Poster Presentations** 17a J. McLeod17b R. Joshi17c S.T. Sikanku |
| 2.30-3:00 | Afternoon Tea |
| 3:00-4.00 | **Session 18, Ground Floor Auditorium: Teacher and parent perspectives**18a L. Strickland & L. Gower18b G. Woodhouse | **Session 19, Level 6 Seminar Room 3: Workshop**19a P. Damsma, J. Norgaard, R. Cantle, & C. Cashmore | **Session 20, Zoom in online: CVI and Explicit Direct Instruction**20a N. McDowell20b S. Jones & S. Wittwer |
| 4:00-5:00 | **Session 21 SPEVI Biennial General Meeting, Ground Floor Auditorium** |
| 5:00 | Close of Day 2 Program |

## Day 3 – Wednesday 15th January 2025

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Time** |  |  |
| 8:15-8:45 | Registration |
| 8:45-10.00 | **Session 22 Plenary,** **Ground Floor Auditorium**Keynote Address: Mr Ben Clare |
| 10:00-10:30 | Morning Tea Break |
| 10:30-12.00 | **Session 23, Ground Floor Auditorium: Technology**23a P. Cracknell23b S. Taylor23c D. Woodbridge | **Session 24, Level 6 Seminar Room 3: Deafblindness / Additional Disabilities**24a S. Rose24b J. Middleton & C. Pine24c M. Prain & S. Rose | **Session 25, Level 6 Meeting Room: Life and Leadership Skills**25a C. Embling25b P. Rolland & P. Izzard |
| 12:00-1:00 | Lunch break and visit exhibitors |
| 1:00-2.30 | **Session 26, Ground Floor Auditorium: Pacific and Community**26a R. Paueli & A. Dares26b B. Farouk & V. Salafabisi26c B. Clare | **Session 27, Level 6 Seminar Room 3: Workshops**27a L. Gower & H. O’Brien27b M. Cain, R. Martin, & W. Jackes | **Session 28, Level 6 Meeting Room: Braille and CVI** 28a T. d’Apice & S. Silveira28b K. Weaver28c U. White |
| 2.30-3:00 | Afternoon Tea Break SPEVI Bear Exhibitor Draw |
| 3:00-4:00 | **Session 29, Ground Floor Auditorium:****Orientation and Mobility**29a M. Roth, D. Moyle, & P. Foote29b (Online) N. McDowell & S. Arrian | **Session 30, Level 6 Seminar Room 3: Teaching**30a D. Goodsir30b M. Fanshawe & M. Cain | **Session 31, Zoom in online: Entrepreneurship and Art**31a K. Rattray31b J. Kuman |
| 4:00-5:00 | **Session 32 Closing Session,** **Ground Floor Auditorium** |
| 5:00 | Close of Conference |

# Monday 13th January 2025

## Session 1 Inaugural Plenary (Ground Floor Auditorium)

### Keynote Address: Life on our terms: How to consciously create a life of adventure, opportunity and empowerment

9:45am – 11:00am

**Keynote Presenter:** Dr Chantelle Griffiths,Co-Founder and CEO, Tactile and Technology Literacy Centre, Auckland, New Zealand

**Biography**

Chantelle has been blind since birth. Her career to date has centred around access technology and braille instruction, with an emphasis on teaching literary and music braille to adults.

After a successful entrepreneurship scholarship in 2021, Chantelle co-founded and became the CEO of New Zealand’s first braille-related social enterprise, the Tactile and Technology Literacy Centre (TTLC). Though the organisation is still in its infancy, TTLC has so far embarked on several major projects. In 2023, TTLC received a generous grant from the Ministry of Culture and Heritage to create a braille music curriculum and framework for New Zealand in collaboration with braille music specialists and transcribers. The curriculum and framework have already garnered international interest following presentations at the 2025 conferences for the Round Table, and the International Council on English Braille (ICEB). TTLC has a strong interest in creative and intentional use of tactile graphics for the resources they create and is actively exploring adding 3D and UV printing to their offerings. Chantelle is also in the process of developing a braille-first system for tap dance notation in collaboration with New Zealand’s leading dance specialist for blind learners, combining her love of braille and her experience as a tap dancer.

Chantelle has a close association with BLENNZ as an access technology instructor and has tutored braille music at their Music School programme for school-age learners for many years. Recently she has created an immersion course for upper high school learners on advanced leadership skills that has since become a popular choice for those who wish to extend their leadership knowledge and capabilities. She also volunteers for the UK-based Braillists Foundation, moderating virtual events for a global audience and presenting masterclasses on braille-related topics such as increasing reading speed and fluency.

Chantelle is a trustee for the Braille Authority of New Zealand Aotearoa Trust and is on the executive committee of the Australia New Zealand Accessible Graphics Group, a sub-committee of Round Table. She is becoming increasingly involved with ICEB, representing New Zealand on the Public Relations committee, and taking an active interest in the areas of Code Maintenance and technology.

Chantelle’s collaborative, creative and visionary approach to braille teaching and learning shines through in everything she does. She is delighted and humbled to have the opportunity to speak at the SPEVI conference in 2025.

## Concurrent Sessions 2 - 4

## Session 2: Braille & Tactile Literacy (Ground Floor Auditorium)

### 2a. SPEVI Position Statement on Braille Literacy in Australia

11:00am – 11:30am

**Presenters**: Jo Minnis, SPEVI Inc Committee of Management

#### Abstract

The Position Statement of the South Pacific Educators in Vision Impairment Inc. on Braille Literacy in Australia was developed in response to the universal challenges faced by educators of students with blindness and low vision in effectively teaching braille and ensuring the implementation of best practice. The aim of the Position Statement is to make explicit the fundamental right of quality instruction in braille literacy and numeracy for all pre-school and school-aged students with blindness and low vision throughout Australia, as a means of ensuring equity and excellence in education. This presentation seeks to inform and engage interested parties including parents, students, educators and policy makers about the Position Statement and its potential applications.

**Biography**

**Jo Minnis** serves as the Manager of Statewide Support Services at the SA School and Services for Vision Impaired, where she has the privileged of leading a team of dedicated Specialist Teachers - Vision in advocating for the equitable access to education, resources and support for students with blindness and low vision.

### 2b. The pathway to the pathway: Building the evidence for an empirical braille literacy learning progression and beyond

11:30am – 12:00pm

**Presenter:** Emily White, University of Melbourne

#### Abstract

Research suggests that expert teachers of students with disability can accurately describe how these students develop complex capabilities such as literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy (Woods & Griffin, 2020). Knowing how a learner develops a capability, such as braille literacy, can help teachers to set learning goals, target their teaching to a learner’s point of readiness to learn (or Zone of Proximal Development) (Vygotsky, 1978), assess learner progress, and reflect on progress (Griffin, 2018). By grounding their pedagogy in evidence, such as empirical knowledge about how learners learn a capability, and aligning a learner’s current abilities with that knowledge, teachers can be confident of providing an effective approach to teaching and learning.

With an increasing focus on the power of evidence-based teaching around the world, braille learners deserve the same high-quality education as anyone else. Proposed by White in 2020, this research seeks to address the evidence gap in how braille learners learn to read and write in braille, starting by asking those with expertise in braille education to describe the expected learning pathway for braille literacy capability over time, from emergence to mastery.

This presentation will discuss the outcomes from recent workshops with experts in braille literacy education, including a draft rubric of how they expect braille literacy to develop over time. This rubric includes descriptions of the skills, knowledges, and behaviours required to become braille literate, and how they can be observed over time by teachers who are sighted or are blind or have low vision. Conference participants will be invited to engage with the draft rubric during the presentation and provide feedback on the content and wording as a research exercise. Such feedback will be used to strengthen the validity and reliability of the future research outcomes of a validated assessment tool and empirical learning progression.

#### Biography

**Dr Emily H. White** (she/they) is a Lecturer in Learning Intervention in the University of Melbourne’s Faculty of Education. She serves as the President of the Pacific Region of the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment. A qualified vision specialist teacher and health/physical education teacher, Emily has nearly 20 years’ experience in disability-specific and inclusive education. With a focus on learners with vision impairment, her work engages with the complexity of enabling children with disability to succeed in an inaccessible world by supporting their right to inclusion and to disability-specific teaching and learning that meets their needs.

### Session 2c. New developments in UEB Online

12:00pm – 12:30pm

**Presenters:** Frances Gentle and Craig Cashmore

#### Abstract

NextSense is excited to announce the launch of its UEB Online training series, “Instructional Approaches to Braille Literacy.” This series aims to equip subscribers with essential knowledge and skills in braille literacy instruction. It covers research-based approaches to braille assessment and programming, teaching and learning strategies, and the developmental steps involved in achieving fluency and comprehension in braille reading and writing. The training series is delivered as a series of instructional video lessons followed by a short quiz at the end of each lesson to test knowledge. The training series can be accessed via UEB Online (uebonline.org). The lessons are offered free of charge, with an optional administration fee of AUD 50.00 for certificates of completion.

Building on the existing NextSense UEB Online training modules and competency exams in Unified English Braille (literary and mathematics), this series recognizes that knowing the braille alphabet and contractions is not enough to teach braille literacy effectively. Just as teachers of sighted children need more than alphabet knowledge, braille literacy teachers need specialised skills and knowledge to support children with blindness and low vision. Access to knowledgeable braille teachers significantly enhances a learner’s tactile perception and fluency in braille reading and writing.

NextSense is dedicated to providing world-class education for children and adults with sensory impairments, as well as the professionals and families who support them. We believe that the “Instructional Approaches to Braille Literacy” training series offers a valuable opportunity for educators, parents, and others in low-, middle-, and high-income countries to acquire essential braille literacy knowledge and skills.

#### Biography

**Dr Frances Gentle** is an academic and research staff member at the NextSense Institute and conjoint lecturer in the Master of Disability Studies program at Macquarie University. She is the Immediate Past President of both the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment and South Pacific Educators in Vision Impairment. Her professional interests are rights-based legislation and policies and disability-inclusive education for children with blindness, low vision, deafblindness and multiple disability.

**Craig Cashmore** is the Founder and Director of PeppaCode, a web and app development business focused on 'out-of-the-ordinary' strategic web and software development for small business, start-ups and educational institutions. Craig has been the lead programmer for UEB Online since its launch in 2014. Craig continues to work on new and innovative projects using modern technologies.

## Session 3: Parents and Caregivers (Level 6 Seminar Room 3)

### 3a Exploring family quality of life among families raising children with vision impairment

11:00am – 11:30am

**Presenter**: Sue Silveira, NextSense Institute

#### Abstract:

Family plays a vital role in supporting a child to thrive, especially when the child has a disability. Family Quality of Life (FQoL) is an emerging, yet a critical factor that reflects how well families manage their lives together. The FQoL approach is considered as the paradigm shift in medical and disability arenas from “fixing” an individual’s deficits, to supporting and strengthening individuals and their families (Turnbull et al., 2007).

By measuring FQoL of families who are raising children with vision impairment, the child’s unique requirements as well as their families can be better understood by teachers, service providers, policy makers, and researchers (Park et al., 2003). Families may then have the opportunity to be empowered through strategies from various stakeholders and be supported as a whole unit (Bagur et al., 2023). However, FQoL of families raising a child with vision impairment has not been measured using validated tools in previous research.

In 2023, Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee approved the administration of an anonymous online survey via Facebook. Families living in Australia raising children with vision impairment were invited to complete an adapted version of the Beach Center’s Family Quality of Life (BC-FQoL) scale (Hoffman et al., 2006). The BC-FQoL was used to measure satisfaction across family interaction; parenting; emotional, physical material well-being; and disability related support.

This presentation will discuss the findings of the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the online survey, from 32 respondents. The attitudes and opinions of parents and key family members of children with vision impairment, and their conclusions about their FQoL will be shared.

#### Biography:

**Dr Sue Silveira’s** initial qualification is in paediatric Orthoptics and has worked extensively in the NSW public hospital system and in vision screening programs. Sue previously held an academic position with the School of Orthoptics, University of Sydney. Sue currently holds a conjoint academic position with Macquarie University and is the Course Director for the Master of Disability Studies. Sue teaches in the areas of vision impairment and disability. Sue is also a research fellow with the NextSense Institute. She is the chief investigator on a project titled the Australian Childhood Vision Impairment Register, a co-investigator on projects related to braille, developing accessible playgrounds for children with vision impairment; and Family Quality of Life.

### 3b Building community capacity for inclusion

11:30am – 12:00pm

**Presenter:** Margo Carwardine, Queensland Braille Writing Association (Braille House)

#### Abstract

There are many, yet to be developed opportunities in the tourism sphere, especially for accommodation, hospitality, and tourist and event venues to make their destination (more) accessible for visitors who are blind or have low vision. Empowering these businesses to step into this space and build their capacity for inclusion requires practical, well-informed guidance and support, and possibly a little ‘nudging’ from the community. In 2023 Braille House was one of only five successful applicants to be awarded an Accessible Tourism Enabler Grant by the Queensland Government (as part of its 2023 Year of Accessible Tourism). The project involved engaging in a collaborative process with stakeholders to ultimately enable people with vision impairment to function more independently and with equity and dignity in the tourism and visitor setting. Working with people who have lived experience with blindness or low vision, as well as experienced orientation and mobility specialists, was key in advancing the project.

Now finalised, the initiative delivers an online package of free resources to accommodation, hospitality and tourist and event destination providers. To advance the tourism sector’s capacity in this space, supportive and encouraging voices are required from those with vision impairment, as well as their family, friends, travel buddies, allied health professionals and policy makers. This presentation is designed to empower those voices through practical and positive ideas and resources, so that everyone benefits.

#### Biography

**Margo Carwardine** came to Braille House as a volunteer late in 2021 from a background in education and school leadership spanning nearly four decades. Margo’s interest and involvement in the inspiring work of Braille House grew, as did her role. In mid-2023 Margo was appointed as the Project Coordinator of the Accessible Tourism Enabler Grant received by Braille House as part of the Queensland Government’s Year of Accessible Tourism. These days Margo is the Special Projects Manager for the organization and the General Manager’s Executive Assistant. Margo holds a Dip Teach, B.Ed., Grad Dip Arts and MEd.

### 3c Grief and loss experienced by parents of children diagnosed with vision impairment

12:00pm – 12:30pm

**Presenter:** Sau Kuan (Janet) Cheong, Guide Dogs Queensland

#### Abstract

Vision is one of the five senses human uses to receive information from their surroundings. Over the course of human evolution, vision has become more prominent over other sensory inputs. Much information in our environment is presented visually, using visual features to attract our attention. The multidisciplinary team at Guide Dogs Queensland provide services for individuals with low vision or blindness across the age band.

One of the services included in the multidisciplinary team is psychological services. The role of the Psychologist often focuses on adjustment issues or other emerging mental health concerns associated to vision loss. For individual diagnosed with a vision condition later in life, it is common to experience the process of grief and loss as they adjust to living with low vision or blindness. For children diagnosed with a vision condition either at birth or at an early stage of life, grief and loss symptoms are rarely observed. Children tended to adjust and adapt quickly given the plasticity of their developing brain. However, it was observed that parents sometimes present with grief symptoms in relation to their child’s diagnosis of vision impairment. Hence, the role of the Psychologist often encompasses intervention with the family.

Through the psychological services at Guide Dogs Queensland, it was observed that psychological intervention focusing on grief and adjustment for parents can increase parents’ acceptance and readiness to support their child. In our experience working with families, parents’ acceptance of their child increased their participation in interventions with their child. Parents were more likely to be involved in therapy and follow through with exercises between consultations, resulting in great success in early intervention.

#### Biography

**Dr Sau Kuan (Janet) Cheong** is a Clinical Psychologist practicing at Guide Dogs Queensland. She obtained her Bachelor in Psychology and her Masters in Clinical Psychology at the National University of Malaysia. She graduated with her PhD from the Australian Catholic University. Her doctoral research investigated the self-concept of preadolescent children with cerebral palsy. Her role at Guide Dogs supports clients and their family through different periods of adjustment at varying stages of vision impairment. Through this process, many individuals with vision impairment adjust to changes in their lives following the diagnosis of vision impairment and create a fulfilling life.

## Session 4: Early Childhood and Inclusion (Zoom in Online)

### 4a Let’s get moving! Early intervention to promote motor development in a blind infant

11:00am – 11:30am

**Presenter:** Kathryn Leonida, BLENNZ

#### Abstract

This case study celebrates the profoundly positive impact of intentional, collaborative, early intervention to promote motor development in a blind infant, Riley. In this case study I share what led me to engage in promoting Riley’s motor development and how we as a team went about this. This presentation gives opportunities to watch Riley’s growing skills in action through photos and video clips, from 6 months to 2 ½ years, showing the positive flow-on effect this work has had across other areas of Riley’s development and his engagement in activities across the expanded core curriculum.

Through this work, Riley himself experienced empowerment in his ability to move and interact with his environment, giving him more opportunity to learn and to make choices. His family and the teachers in his early childhood centre were also empowered, through shared ideas and knowledge, to be the change-makers in Riley’s development, with the full team taking part in supporting his learning in collaboration. This presentation also advocates for the importance of an intentional focus on motor development for blind infants, and how this will be of benefit to their holistic development.

#### Biography

**Kathryn Leonida** is one of the Senior Resource Teachers Vision (RTV) in BLENNZ Hamilton, New Zealand. She has been an RTV for 20 years, with particular areas of passion within her work being supporting ākonga (learners) using Braille, Developmental Orientation and Mobility, early childhood education and cerebral vision impairment (CVI). Kathryn is an advocate of the importance of all areas of the expanded core curriculum, and of supporting ākonga and their whānau (families) in a way that empowers them to make informed choices, and to be resilient problem solvers in their journey through the education system and onwards.

### 4b The Oregon Project: Overview and new 7th Edition

11:30am – 12:00pm

**Presenter:** Tyler York, Southern Oregon ESD - OR Project

#### Abstract

The OR Project is an assessment and curriculum for intervention planning and progress monitoring to educators of young children with visual impairments. It consists of the Manual of information for preschool educational planning and development, the Skills Inventory and Teaching Activities for all the skills. It is a criterion-referenced assessment and is not designed to obtain a precise "score."

The OR Project is based on the premise that children who are visually impaired or blind can learn, grow, and develop much like children with normal sight. However, the impact of the visual impairment may change the timing of their development. If the child is blind, some changes and modifications of the learning environment are needed. We have recently released the 7th edition of the OR Project which is now a web-based version.

#### Biography

**Tyler York** has been in education for 15 years with 11 of those years as a TVI. He currently acts as department chair at Southern Oregon ESD and oversee the OR Project - Assessment and Curriculum for Preschool Children Who are Blind or Visually Impaired.

### 4c Understanding barriers to digital inclusion students may encounter

12:00pm – 12:30pm

**Presenter:** Sarahelizabeth Baguhn, American Foundation for the Blind

#### Abstract

Ensuring accessibility for everyone, including those who are blind, have low vision, or are deafblind, in the digital landscape is a moving target. The American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) has led comprehensive research of digital accessibility barriers through two significant studies: the Barriers to Digital Inclusion Survey and Barriers to Digital Inclusion 2.

The results of the first study, a survey of 398 participants, were shared in early 2024, and identified obstacle encountered by. Building upon the foundation laid by the initial survey, AFB embarked on the Barriers to Digital Inclusion 2 study to offer a more nuanced understanding of the digital experiences of blind and low vision individuals in real-time settings. Twenty participants completed daily diaries over a period of 10 days, providing detailed accounts of their interactions with websites, apps, and kiosks across various activities. These firsthand narratives offer invaluable insights into the specific challenges encountered by individuals with visual impairments, highlighting the persistent obstacles hindering their full inclusion in the digital realm.

The diaries compiled in the Barriers to Digital Inclusion 2 study (BDIS2) illustrate the impact of digital accessibility barriers on both individuals and the companies they would do business with. From inaccessible interfaces to navigational challenges, the barriers documented in these diaries underscore the pressing need for comprehensive solutions to foster digital inclusion. In this session, participants will learn impacts such as time, cost, emotion, and lost business measured through BDIS2. Educators can consider strategies they are equipping their students with to cope with today’s most prevalent barriers, while advocates push for further changes that promote greater digital inclusion. AFB dreams of a more equitable digital landscape, where every individual, regardless of ability, can fully participate and thrive.

#### Biography

**Sarahelizabeth Baguhn**, PhD, has worked itinerantly and in a residential school as a COMS, CATIS, and TVI. She is the Research Specialist for the American Foundation for the Blind, where her work aims to inform data-driven decisions in policy and advocacy efforts in blindness space with rigorous research. Dr. Baguhn serves on Board of Directors for ACVREP, the subject matter expert committee for Assistive Technology with ACVREP, as well as the advisory council for Audio Description. She has published in JVIB on techniques for teaching echo identification in O&M, and assessment validation.

## Session 5: Panel (Ground Floor Auditorium)

### 5. Essential factors to build Quality of Life and wellbeing through the teen years

1:30pm – 2:15pm

**Panel Members:** Melissa Cain, Melinda Whipp and young adults

#### Abstract

Discussions around quality of life (QoL) for young people with blindness or low vision (BLV) typically centre on a list of common deficits: inaccessibility and lack of opportunities manifesting as lower rates of employment, poorer health outcomes, lower educational achievements, and higher rates of psychological distress than their sighted peers. Young people with BLV are also less likely to be involved in sport and physical activity, and more likely to be socially isolated (Cain et al., 2023). The panel of young adults in this session flips this stereotypical lens by discussing aspects of their teen years that have enhanced their wellbeing and quality of life.

As a concept, QoL "identifies what is important, necessary, and satisfying in human existence" (Oliveira et al., 2018). Wellbeing, a multidimensional construct, refers to "people’s capacity to live healthy, creative, and fulfilling lives" (Western & Tomaszewski, 2016, p. 1). Positive cognitive, emotional, physical, and social experiences serve as protective factors, and contribute to building one's resilience, self-efficacy, and self-determination, thus enabling individuals to contribute to society, achieve personal and altruistic goals, and gain independence.

In this strength-based session, panel members will discuss what aspects of their teen years served to boost their wellbeing and QoL, that is, what made them feel good and function effectively. The discussion will include the role of mentors, social networks, parents, and family members, as well as sport, employment, and music amongst other factors. Using the PERMA wellbeing framework (Siegelman, 2018; Butler & Kern, 2016) as an anchor, panel members will shed light on the ways young people with BLV can experience positive emotions, increase engagement, strengthen social connectedness, discover meaning and value, and instil a desire to achieve. Attendees are encouraged to be active in this discussion.

#### Biography

**Dr Melissa Cain** teaches and researches in the fields of Inclusive Education and Creative Arts education and supervises Higher Degree Research students in these areas. Melissa’s current research centres on facilitating full access to the Australian Curriculum for students with disability and supporting students with blindness and low vision in mainstream schools. Melissa was a schoolteacher in Australia and Southeast Asia for many years, has managed three large-scale national Learning and Teaching projects, and has produced an international MOOC through EdX and Microsoft. Melissa has received several higher education teaching awards and is the recipient of the Callaway Doctoral Award.

**Melinda Whipp** is a qualified specialist teacher of students who are blind / vision impaired.  She has worked with the Queensland Department of Education for 26 years in regional, rural and remote locations, supporting students, schools, and families of children with vision impairments from birth to school-leaving age.

Originally a high school Japanese teacher, Melinda was inspired by her son, Sidney, who was born legally blind, to pursue a Master’s Degree in Special Education (Vision Impairment), which she completed in 2011.

Passionate about supporting the vision impairment community, Melinda volunteers with Vision Australia and has recently been selected as a LEGO Braille Bricks Ambassador.

## Session 6: Panel (Ground Floor Auditorium)

### 6. The New Frontier of Braille: How do we integrate multiline displays with screen readers in education

2:15pm – 3:00pm

**Panel Members**: Michael Curran, Debra Goodsir and invited guests

#### Biography

**Michael Curran** is a passionate Software Engineer and accessibility consultant with over 16 years of experience in the development, implementation, and adoption of accessible technologies. Dedicated advocator for improvements to quality of life through technological enhancements for people with disabilities. Extensive expertise with regard to key software accessibility standards, software APIs, and best practice approaches to functional usability. Creator of the free and open source NVDA screen reading software, enabling more than 200,000 blind and vision impaired people across the globe to independently use computers. Significantly contributed to the accessibility of major products from global technology companies including Google, Microsoft, Mozilla, and Adobe. Proficiencies in Python, C++, and Windows application development and debugging.

**Debra Goodsir** started teaching in 1986 and over those years she has learnt many things. She has lived and worked in remote, regional and small city areas, as well as overseas. Debra enjoys holidays more than she enjoys working and has recently found the time to read more books.

## Concurrent Sessions 7 - 9

## Session 7: Young People - Considerations (Ground Floor Auditorium)

### 7a Enhancing inclusivity for students who are vision impaired at a local high school

3:30pm – 4:00pm

**Presenter**: Antony Abbracciavento

#### Abstract

This presentation aims to explore the results of my analysis as part of a Year 12 subject into ways a local Adelaide high school can better empower students who are vison impaired. My own experiences throughout my schooling years have given me an excellent understanding of the best ways to create accessible and inclusive environments, which was the impetus for the self-directed project. The focus question of “How can [the high school] reduce active and passive vision impairment discrimination and create a more accessible and inclusive school environment?” was chosen as I wished to improve the school experiences of Vision Impaired (VI) students in the future by enhancing general inclusivity within [the high school]. Unfortunately, much like anyone who is perceived as "different," those who are VI are often unfairly disadvantaged both academically and socially. I sought survey responses from individuals who are vision impaired from two Adelaide high schools, sighted students from my school, and selected staff at the school. The intent was to enhance the school experiences of VI students while promoting understanding and engagement among all students, while also increasing overall student engagement with and understanding of those who have differences.

#### Biography

**Antony Abbracciavento** was born with bilateral microphthalmia and sclerocornea, and is currently studying Year 12 in a mainstream school, with a view to doing a Double degree in 2025, with majors in Music (Composition) and Arts (Politics). He is passionate about music and accessibility and am School President and member of the Marion Youth Committee. Earlier this year, Antony was co-awarded the Young Citizen of the Year in my local council for leading a day where people without vision impairment experienced eating in the dark and an audio described movie. I am currently working towards a bigger event celebrating disability and what they can achieve.

### 7b Providing and promoting high expectations for children with vision impairment

4:00pm – 4:30pm

**Presenter:** Kristy Wallace, parent

#### Abstract

As a mum of a child who is blind, as well as a teacher I know first hand the importance of providing children with the dignity of high expectations. This presentation will explore the impact that high expectations have on the educational and developmental outcomes for vision impaired students, as well the benefit they can have in promoting social inclusion with their peers. It will also discuss the need for us as parents and educators to create narratives of high expectations so that we can impact the communities in which we live and change societal norms and narratives around disability. This presentation will explain how to coordinate and implement a 'Braille Bombing' of your school or wider community and empower parents and educators to step into their power to promote and implement high expectations for their children and students.

#### Biography

**Kristy Wallace** is the mother of an 8 year old boy who is blind and has a brain tumour, as well as a High School Teacher. I am passionate about student well-being and having high expectations for all, but particularly people with a disability, as I have seen first hand the life changing impact that they can have. With the help of outstanding Vision Support Teachers in my region, I coordinated the first Braille Bombing event in regional Australia, to raise awareness and increase engagement with Braille as a language and to start inclusive conversations about it. I firmly believe that the more we can share and educate others about disability the more respect, dignity and inclusion our children will have. I pride myself on advocating for my child, empowering him to self advocate and encouraging others to lift the veil that surrounds disability so that they can achieve the best outcomes for their child.

### 7c What are my options? Life Post School - Vision Impairment and Intellectual Disability

4:30pm – 5:00pm

**Presenter:** Lee Strickland, Dotted Beats

#### Abstract

Educating children who are blind with variant intellectual disabilities and independence, it is heartbreaking to witness transitions into life post-school where young people become disconnected with their orientation and mobility skills, lose knowledge and use of literacy, numeracy, competencies and independence. Meaningful post-school functional skill-based programs catering specifically for this cohort are non-existent. Opportunities to enrol in programs after school are dependent on respite-based agencies where these young adults are by far the minority. What does this mean? Being 1 possibly 2 blind adults in a group of 20 or more. Respite based agencies unfortunately do not have staff trained in supporting people who are blind therefore, despite best intentions, strip young adults in this community of their capabilities and independence.

In 2024 Dotted Beats launched a pilot program aiming to close gaps in post-school learning opportunities for young adults who are blind with a mild to moderate intellectual disabilities, under the cover of a music program. Participants plan musical events, promote and deliver to the wider community. An Electronic Dance Party is the participant chosen project which will showcase participants original songs composed with digital technologies during the program. To successfully execute such a project, literacy skills, money management and technology use are required to research, email, promote, create timetables, compose music etc. These skilled capabilities are at the core of this program to enhance lives, build independence, work skills, self-advocacy and be a fundamental source of empowerment. Throughout this presentation, goals, programming, hurdles and participant progress over the 16-week Music Appreciation and Confidence Program will be shared with photos, video footage, data collections and functional assessment results. This presentation aims to inspire and encourage others to start similar programs nationally/internationally. Opportunities for success = empowerment.

#### Biography

Founder and Director of Dotted Beats Pty Ltd, **Lee Strickland** has been working in the field of Special Education, Vision Impairment and Music for fifteen years. DB was created in 2020 to provide opportunities for children and adults in the VI community in all areas of music, social and community connections, independent life and capacity building skills. From braille music theory, instrument lessons, community bands, capacity building projects, work experience and employment skills, Dotted Beats endeavours to create meaningful opportunities for clients, promoting self-advocacy and independence. In 2023, Dotted Beats was nominated in the top three finalists for the Blind Australian of the Year Employer's Choice Award. Dotted Beats is dedicated to creating equal opportunities for children and adults in the VI community and will always seek to learn and share knowledge.

## Session 8: Workshops (Level 6 Seminar Room 3)

### 8a Workshop: Sonification in the classroom

3:30pm – 4:15pm

**Presenters:** Lily Gower, SA School and Services for Vision Impaired, and Phia Damsma, Sonokids Australia

#### Abstract

This presentation explores innovative approaches to teaching sonification skills to primary school-aged children who are blind or have low vision, drawing insights from professionals in app development and education. Phia introduces CosmoBally on Sonoplanet, an educational app designed for exploring sonification through interactive games. Sonification is a technology that represents information in non-speech sound. It can serve as an alternative format for access to information. The session then shifts focus to Lily, who discusses the integration of the CosmoBally app into the curriculum and her pedagogical strategies for teaching sonification in the classroom. Central to the discussion are fundamental questions: What is sonification? Where is it applied? Why is it beneficial? The aim is to demonstrate how students not only build effective sonification skills but how this learning is then utilised to develop proficiency in recognising, interpreting, utilizing, and creating tactile graphics, particularly maps and images employing coordinates, grids, and various types of graphs.

Participants in the workshop will engage in a structured series of activities that demonstrate sequential teaching of these concepts: starting with an introduction to sonification, progressing through understanding horizontal and vertical dimensions, exploring grids, rows, columns, delving into coordinates relevant to mapping, and finally, comprehending graphical representations. The workshop concludes by outlining follow-up activities and discussing the practical implications of acquiring these skills and how these empower young students. Phia emphasises the reciprocal relationship between tactile reading and digital proficiency, highlighting their mutual reinforcement in educational contexts.

The presentation invites questions and reflections on how to effectively implement sonification education, encouraging dialogue on future directions and applications for children with visual impairments. Participants are encouraged to envision the broader implications of integrating tactile and digital literacies in educational frameworks. This workshop is suitable and useful for anyone with and without prior knowledge of sonification, or the app. Both in-person and online participants will be able to participate in workshop activities with basic drawing materials.

**Biography**

**Phia Damsma** is Creative Director of Sonokids Australia, developer of ‘Ballyland’ software and game apps that support learning of essential technology skills by students who are blind or have low vision. Apart from designing the next fun educational app, Phia gives presentations and writes course materials on accessible teaching of digital skills and emerging technologies. She is Co-President of SPEVI Inc. and Lead of the Sonification World Chat Working Group ‘Learn’. Phia is co-author of a Sonification paper in Nature Astronomy (2022) and published “Hearing a Circle: An Exploratory Study of Accessible Sonification for Young Children with Blindness and Low Vision” in the British Journal of Visual Impairment (2024).

Nationally Accredited Highly Accomplished Teacher, **Lily Gower**, has taught at the South Australian School and Services for Vision Impaired for 15 years. Lily has worked as a classroom teacher, a state-wide vision support teacher and a music and creative arts specialist teacher. Lily was awarded the Ministers Arts Education Award in 2019 which gave her the opportunity to travel to Auckland, New Zealand and be mentored by PHD Wendy Richards in braille music pedagogy and music access technology. Lily is passionate about providing innovative arts lessons to fully support the participation of students with diverse access needs. When she's not teaching, she enjoys playing saxophone in her funk band, Circa 74.

### 8b Let’s code with LEGO Braille bricks

4.15pm – 5:00pm

**Presenter:** Marc Angelier, The Braille Program, LEGO Foundation

#### Abstract

Through interactive brick-based activities, you will discover how LEGO Braille Bricks can be used to develop amazing coding skills amongst students. You will explore the Power of Play and Coding using bricks. Learning braille is crucial for blind and visually impaired children as it allows them to develop a variety of essential life skills ensuring they experience intellectual freedom, independence and equal access to education and work. They often struggle at school when it comes to coding concepts in maths, science and computing. The LEGO Braille Bricks concept can help them learn these skills. Play nurtures and develops the breadth of skills that enable us to be powerful agents of our own lives and positive contributors to our communities. The LEGO Braille Bricks concept thus presents a groundbreaking and inclusive opportunity to teach blind, visually impaired and sighted children alongside each other by offering a fun and playful way to engage, interact and learn together.

#### Biography

Staunch defender of braille, co-author of tactile books for blind children and specialized teaching methods, **Marc Angelier** travels the world training teachers in pedagogical techniques specific to visual impairment to make inclusive schooling for all a reality! He participates in research studies and training programs to increase students with disabilities’ accessibility to education. Since 2019, he is, with Marie Oddoux, in charge of the development and implementation of the inclusive LEGO Braille Bricks concept for the LEGO Foundation. This amazing concept allows visually impaired children from all over the world to learn braille and develop the breadth of skills they will need for the future.

## Session 9: Braille & Tactile Literacy (Zoom in Online)

### 9a Actual Tactuals Braille: Easy step-by-step methods for teaching braille reading using actual tactual materials

3:30pm – 4:00pm

**Presenters**: Roberta Becker and Tamara Black, Actual Tactuals Braille

#### Abstract

Actual Tactuals Braille introduces "BrailleBlazer," an easy to use curriculum for beginning braille readers, or for those having difficulty learning braille. A fun activity book covering beginning braille, Alphabetic Wordsigns, Strong Contractions, and basic reading skills. This book has had great success with beginning braille readers of all ages. Students look forward to working in the book. UEB Practice Sentences (UEBPS), a program for braille readers who may need additional practice with contractions, will also be discussed. In "UEBPS" and "BrailleBlazer" contractions and symbols are presented in a non-threatening, easy-to-understand manner. Both books are systematic and comprehensive. No contractions are ever used, unless they have been presented. UEBPS covers all contractions and many commonly used symbols.

#### Biography

**Roberta Becker** is a Library of Congress Certified Braille Transcriber, former Vision Rehabilitation Teacher and a retired Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI, 31 years). Additionally, Roberta holds certifications in Elementary Education and Special Education. She is currently writing curricula that promote and improve braille literacy for students of all ages. They are "Unified English Braille (UEB) Practice Sentences" and "BrailleBlazer."

**Tamara Black** has been a TVI for 15 years. Prior to that, she was a General Education Teacher for 13 years, and taught all grades, Kindergarten through 6th. Additionally, Tamara was a Mentor Teacher for Student-Teachers from San Francisco State University's Vision Program in California (US). She has also been a Teacher Induction Program Mentor for the San Ramon Valley Unified School District (US).

### 9b Quality of life for braille users: What does the literature say?

4:00pm – 4:30pm

**Presenter:** Aasha Rose, University of Southern Queensland

#### Abstract

The global education system is replete with robust, valid and reliable measures of literacy for students with vision who access print as their medium of instruction. In addition, international research shows direct links between print literacy and numerous positive outcomes, including quality of life (QoL). This presentation will provide the results of a scoping review that set out to uncover a) if there is a valid and reliable measure of Braille literacy, and b) if Braille literacy is linked to QoL outcomes. 6 databases were searched using specific search criteria. 3170 articles were found, which went through a process of title and abstract searching by 2 researchers, followed by full text screening and methodological quality assessment. In total, 47 papers were included in the review. Three major themes were induced: the components of braille literacy, teaching and learning and quality of life.

The findings revealed that researchers have been writing about braille literacy for decades, yet little agreement has formed on the concept of braille literacy. Literacy is a fundamental human right, yet this review indicates there is a lack of conceptualisation of braille literacy. There were no valid measures to assess braille literacy in the literature and teachers are relying on what they have always done to teach braille. Qualifications of specialist teachers impact student’s braille learning and resourcing for braille is required for life-long braille use however caseloads and service provision are varied and not well documented. Some studies indicate braille literacy may impact life outcomes however a validated tool for measuring QoL of braille users was not found.

Improving the quality of research evidence, establishing a clear and agreed definition of braille literacy, adopting a comprehensive approach to studying braille literacy, and gathering robust data on its impact on quality of life are essential steps towards emPOWERing the field.

#### Biography

**Aasha Rose** began her PhD studies at University of Southern Queensland in 2024. Aasha’s current research focus is quality of life for braille users. Aasha has been a teacher at South Australian School and Services for Vision Impaired for more than 20 years and strives to implement evidence-based practice, however high quality, robust literature in the field of blindness/low vision is often scarce. Aasha aspires for her PhD to contribute new knowledge to the field of blindness/low vision in the hopes that the future of education of students with blindness/low vision is rigorous, and evidence based.

### 9c The Braille Bites project

4:30pm – 5:00pm

**Presenters:** Jennifer Jesso and Adam Wilton, Provincial Resource Centre for the Visually Impaired; and Daphne Hitchcock, Braille Literacy Canada

#### Abstract

The Braille Bites project is a partnership between Braille Literacy Canada and the Provincial Resource Centre for the Visually Impaired that was born out of a desire to bring relevant, timely information to families of young learners with visual impairments. The philosophy behind Braille Bites is that tactile exploration skills are important for all learners with visual impairments, regardless of how they read and write. Braille Bites consists of short, bite-sized video content on social media that highlights tactile strategies and skill development in areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum. Modelled on the format of a cooking show, each video presents a short summary of a skill or activity that is accompanied by a downloadable “recipe card” where the activity is elaborated upon and links to additional resources are available. The series is presented by teachers of students with visual impairments (TSVIs), some of whom also have lived experience. In this presentation, we will share some of the Braille Bites resources, strategies used to create and film the project, as well as examples of how the videos have been used by TSVIs and community-based organizations serving families and children with visual impairments.

#### Biography

**Jennifer (Jen) Jesso** is currently the Outreach Coordinator for the Provincial Resource Centre for the Visually Impaired in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada and currently serves as Secretary on the board of Braille Literacy Canada. Over the past 17 years, as a teacher of students with visual impairments and orientation and mobility specialist, Jen has worked with individuals with visual impairments across the lifespan. As a braille user herself and a certified braille transcriber, Jen is passionate about equitable access to braille and the importance of braille literacy.

Over the past 40 years, **Daphne Hitchcock** has enjoyed working with students who have visual impairments, ages 4-19, in BC and Alberta, Canada. She contributed to the development and delivery of many braille literacy projects, including BC’s Early Literacy for the Visually Impaired, Braille Pre-School Story Kits and Braille Bites. Having seen the power of braille literacy, Daphne continues to be passionate about the importance of braille for everyday routines and the availability of braille in the community. Now retired, she enjoys mentoring teachers of students with visual impairments and being actively involved with Braille Literacy Canada.

**Adam Wilton** is the Program Manager of the Provincial Resource Centre for the Visually Impaired (PRCVI) in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. He has been a teacher for 18 years, working first as a Teacher of Blind and Low Vision Students and Orientation and Mobility Specialist, and currently as an administrator. Adam is also the Regional Coordinator of the BC Regional Braille Challenge, the Vice Chair for Canada in the North America/Caribbean region of the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI), and a Director on the board of Braille Literacy Canada.

# Tuesday 14th January 2025 (Day 2)

## Session 10: Plenary (Ground Floor Auditorium)

### Keynote Address: Let me fail so I can succeed

9:15am – 10:00am

**Keynote Speaker:** Michael Sheppard, Solicitor, Queensland, and former Australian representative in the sport of Goalball

#### Abstract

Growing up in Brisbane, Australia, in the 1990s and 2000s, Michael experienced the changing of education philosophy first hand. In his presentation, Michael will discuss how the teachers who facilitated an environment in which he had a voice instilled in him self-belief that would assist him through times of trial. Michael will discuss how technology has fundamentally shifted the manner in which blind people interact with the world, but argues that if there is to be abiding change then blind people need to have true agency from a young age, the room to grow, and afforded understanding and compassion when that person is dealing with societal doubts and incumbrances.

#### Biography

Michael is a solicitor in Queensland, Australia, holding the position of Special Counsel at HWL Ebsworth Lawyers. He has a Bachelor of Laws (hons) and Bachelor of Business (Management) from the Queensland University of Technology, as well as a Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice.

Michael has over 16 years of experience in defending government and non-government entities in matters involving public liability, workers compensation or medical negligence. A large component of Michael's practice for the past 7 years has been in the area of historical childhood abuse - since the abolishment of the statute of limitations pertaining to such claims.

Michael is also currently a non-executive director of Blind Sports Australia after representing Australia in the sport of Goalball for 14 years.

## Concurrent Sessions 11 - 13

## Session 11: Cutting Edge Research (Ground Floor Auditorium)

### 11a The power of the dots: Empowering braille users through communication connection and language rights

10:30am – 11:00am

**Presenter:** Jodie Lea Martire, University of Queensland

#### Abstract

Braille advocacy often focuses on the question of literacy, and the inherent right of blind and vision-impaired people to access the same educational and life outcomes as sighted people via reading, writing and materials produced in print and digital braille (SPEVI (South Pacific Educators in Vision Impairment Inc.), 2024). In this presentation I will highlight how braille literacy can be a tool for personal and political liberation (Freire & Macedo, 2005) and briefly describe how the braille writing system (Iyengar, 2023) can be protected and promoted using arguments around communication rights (Lee et al., 2007; McLeod, 2018) and language rights (United Nations Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, 2017; Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights Follow-up Committee, 1998).

According to language rights arguments, braille users can be considered a language community whose shared writing system is English written in the braille script. Educators, parents and carers can actively enable braille learners and users to engage with that language community. By involving braillists in activities related to producing, sharing and reading braille, they can enjoy connection with peers, be empowered as members of the braille community, and develop advocacy and self-advocacy skills to ensure that the whole community continues to have access to the braille education, technology and materials that it deserves.

This presentation will use data obtained through volunteering and ethnographic research at Braille House over the course of 2024. It will highlight how both braille learners and fluent braillists can connect with each other and with braille through Braille House’s activities (among others on offer in Australia), and it will show that braillists’ opportunities for community and empowerment can be stimulated through a shared and ongoing engagement with braille as a literacy tool and a language right.

#### Biography

**Jodie Lea Martire** is a PhD candidate in the Centre for Communication and Social Change at The University of Queensland. Her doctorate is focused on minority-language publishing in Australia and its role in communities' defence of their language rights, including a case study of publishing in braille as a minority writing system. Jodie learned braille for print users at Braille House in 2023, and she comes to her research after 20 years' professional experience in the book trade. She worked in human rights for 5 years in Australia and Latin America, and her research interests centre on justice, representation and power in the contemporary publishing industry.

### 11b Skills, thoughts, activities, responsibilities: Development and evaluation of the STAR Kit employability home program

11:00am – 11:30am

**Presenter:** Natalie Kaine, Faculty of Medicine and Health, The University of Sydney

#### Abstract

Research suggests that children with full vision will start learning about job roles from as young as 3 years through incidental visual learning (Hartung et al., 2005; Wolffe, 2014). Consequently, preparing for future employment by acquiring age-appropriate employability skills also commences, developmentally, in early childhood (Laughland-Booÿ et al., 2017; Porfeli & Lee, 2012; Wolffe, 2014). With reduced or absent incidental visual learning, children with vision impairments risk missing out on acquiring understanding about work (Ely & Ostrosky, 2018), on par with their fully sighted peers. Without explicit intervention from others, they may not know what jobs exist, and where and how people perform them (Wolffe, 1999). This compromises their employability preparations for the future, and is reflected in the concerning rates of unemployment and underemployment in Australia and around the world (Harrabi et al., 2014; Wolffe, 2021). Many researchers have recommended that children and adolescents with vision impairments participate in structured activities to learn about work from an early age. It is important that such programs include and consider the critical role parents play in both compensating for incidental visual learning and promoting expectations and attitudes about working (Crudden, 2012; Oliveira et al., 2015).

As part of my doctoral study, I developed a structured career education home program for children with blindness or low vision, aged 5-12 years and their parents. I then evaluated, using quantitative and qualitative methods, the extent to which participating in this program produced changes in families’ beliefs, skills, behaviours and knowledge related to early employability preparations. This paper will demonstrate the intervention – the STAR Kit - and share the evaluation findings.

#### Biography

**Natalie Kaine** is a PhD candidate with Faculty of Medicine and Health at The University of Sydney. Her research thesis is titled Employability preparations for children and young people with blindness and low vision in Australia. Natalie is also a paediatric occupational therapist, and the NSW Children and Young People Client Lead at Vision Australia, based in Sydney. Natalie has a passion for supporting a developmental approach towards the acquisition of employability skills by children with vision impairments, and for 24 years she has worked with children, young people, and their families, in metropolitan, regional, and remote areas of Australia.

### 11c “We're somehow stupid because we don’t have working eyeballs”: Exploring stigma consciousness of children and adolescents with vision impairment

11:30am – 12:00pm

**Presenter:** Emma Sutherland, University of Wollongong & Macquarie University

#### Abstract

The aim of this project was to investigate the stigma consciousness of children and adolescents with vision impairment. Stigma is a “social phenomenon: not an inherent attribute of individuals but a socially constructed and imposed set of identifications” (Jones & Corrigan, 2014, p.24). The notion of ‘normality’ where individuals with a disability have an “undefined status [as]… neither ill nor well” (Murphy et al., 1988, p.235) is echoed across disability research, whereby stigma experiences of individuals with a disability often reflect concepts of awkwardness, pity and perceptions of incompetence (Jones et al., 1994; Pachankis et al., 2018; Phillips, 1990; Susman, 1994). While much of the research on stigma and vision impairment comes from adults, research with children and adolescents tends to focus more broadly on experiences, both nonetheless showing that stigma consciousness and stigma experiences differ between individuals.

As part of a larger Ph.D. project investigating the experiences of stigma and development of sense of self for children and adolescents with vision impairment, this analysis considers responses of 25 children and adolescents (aged 9-17) to two open ended questions adapted from the stigma consciousness scale: “What does having vision impairment mean to you?” and “In your experience, what do you think most people think about kids with vision impairment?” (Daley & Rappolt-Schlichtmann, 2018). Using thematic analysis, we found evidence of several key phenomena noted in past disability-based stigma research. Specifically, children reported misconceptions of ability and competence; stereotypes of blindness; master status and inspirational porn; intended kindness and helping behaviours. Also identified were themes of self-identity; self-advocacy; factual descriptions of differences due to vision impairment; and “the good, the bad and the annoying”. Importantly, although responses varied across participants and broad themes, a key overarching concept of stigma, separation due to difference, was apparent for most responses.

#### Biography

**Emma Sutherland** is a Ph.D. student at the University of Wollongong, under the supervision of Dr Penny Van Bergen (University of Wollongong) and Dr Sue Silveira (Macquarie University & NextSense). Emma has a Bachelor of Teaching (birth to five) and Master of Research and 10 years’ experience teaching at the Macquarie School of Education. As someone with an invisible disability herself, Emma has first-hand experience with stigma. Her Ph.D. aims to investigate the experiences of stigma for children and adolescents with vision impairment from a mixed method, multi-perspective approach.

## Session 12: Sports and Physical Activity (Level 6 Seminar Room 3)

### 12a Bridging the accessibility gap through tactile sporting fields

10:30am – 11:00am

**Presenters:** Frances Raphael, Louise Arvier, Effie Horriat and Gabby Comerford, Vision Australia

#### Abstract

Vision Australia paediatric practitioners have created a range of tactile sporting fields accessible for children and young people who are blind or have no vision to encourage a greater understanding, participation and inclusion in physical and mental wellbeing activities. Partnering with the Vision Australia Print Access team, we have successfully created 3D replicable, printable tactile sporting fields, plus a range of handcrafted sporting fields. Our team will present tactile fields that have been designed over the last year by Vision Australia. These fields have been successfully trialled with primary and high school aged children and have aided in bridging the accessibility gap for these young people, along with their families and school staff.

Children and Young People with visual impairments typically have lower levels of physical activity and higher levels of sedentary time than their sighted peers (Brian at el., 2018). Sedentary time has been shown to increase the risk of comorbidities in visually impaired individuals (O'Day, Killeen, & Iezzoni, 2004). Barriers to participation in sporting activities, such as reduced concept development and spatial awareness (Lieberman et al, 2013), could potentially lead to children avoiding these activities resulting in lower levels of physical activity (Kozub & Oh, 2004). Our tactile sporting fields are designed to be high contrast with tactile line markings, 3D goals and high contrast/tactile magnetic ‘players’ to cater for children and young people with varying degrees of vision impairment. These fields assist children and young people to learn about spatial awareness and concept development through sporting field set up, player numbers/positions and in-game play demonstrations within these sports.

The aim is to provide a practical tool for families, school staff and health professionals to use with children and young people with a vision impairment to empower them to participate in and to further understand sporting activities.

#### Biography

**Frances Raphael** works as a Paediatric Physiotherapist for the Children and Young People Team at Vision Australia and has been in this position since May 2023. Frances works with children up to the age of 18, in home, primary school and high school settings. Following graduation from the University of QLD, Frances has worked as a Physiotherapist in acute care at the Wesley Hospital and St Vincent’s Private Hospital Northside, rotating through different wards. Frances has also worked as a Senior Physiotherapist at Anglicare in community aged care before steering her career path to Paediatrics at Vision Australia.

**Louise Arvier** have worked as a physiotherapist with children who have a vision impairment for the past 33 years. Louise is currently employed at Vision Australia where my caseload includes children up to the age of 18, and her specific interest is working with babies and young children. Since graduating from the University of Qld, Louise has worked in a variety of areas in the paediatric field. She was Senior Physiotherapist at the Wolfson Centre, Institute for Child Health, Great Ormond St, London, with Sophie Levitt, and was involved in combined research projects with the Bobath Centre. On returning to Australia, Louise worked at the Cerebral Palsy League in Brisbane, then as a supervisor/lecturer in Paediatrics at Adelaide University, before returning to Brisbane and joining Blind and Low Vision Youth Support Association. These appointments have provided her with extensive experience to utilise when treating her current patient population.

**Effie Horriat** is one of the paediatric physiotherapists and is part of Vision Australia's paediatric team for the past 2 years, specializing in early intervention and primary school-aged children. Our work focuses on fostering physical activity and development in children who are blind or have low vision. She has had a few blind children who were interested in doing physical activities but had no idea about any sports. By using these tactile fields she have successfully introduced various sports and physical activities to these children, helping them discover and engage in activities they enjoy and that suit their abilities.

**Gabby Comerford** is a senior paediatric physiotherapist who is passionate about supporting clients and their families to achieve their goals. Since joining Vision Australia in 2017, Gabby has worked on several continuous improvement projects such as the Let’s Move Video Series to support the achievement of high-quality outcomes for people who are blind or have low vision. Gabby holds a Graduate Certificate in Management and has a keen interest in the application of coaching in client service delivery and leadership development.

### 12b In 2022; Zero BVI children under 15 Years old are playing sport in WA. Let's change that

11:00am – 11:30am

**Presenter:** Raquelle Hannen-Williams, Blind Sports Western Australia

#### Abstract

My presentation will outline Blind Sports WA's unique program, “Let's Get Visible”. Let’s Get Visible is a specialised physical literacy initiative for school-aged children with vision impairments. Developed by an exercise physiologist and Blind Sports WA team members with lived experience, the after-school program teaches sports-related skills using modified equipment and introduces adapted sports. Emphasising balance and strength, the program enhances mobility and significantly boosts participants' confidence in movement. The accompanying school holiday program offers BVI children a variety of adapted activities, including cooking, crafts, sensory excursions, and sports. These experiences promote social interaction, creativity, and physical activity in a fun, supportive environment, building essential life skills. I want to detail the importance of this unique program and how and why it was developed in 2022. I will share a case study on one of our participants and discuss the program's impact on his physical and mental health and how it has increased his overall sense of well-being and self-esteem.

The presentation aims to inform parents, caregivers, and educators about the importance of sport and recreation for our BVI children and the lifelong benefits and effects such a program can have on these children.

#### Biography

**Raquelle Hannen-Williams** has four (almost) grown children, two of whom are vision impaired and losing their sight. One of her daughters has now lost 95% of her sight. Raquelle attended her first SPEVI conference in 2015 as a parent, desperate for information on how to support her daughters. Since then, Raquelle’s interest in helping people with vision impairment has grown. For the last three years, she has worked for Blind Sports Western Australia as a Development Officer. She has been integral in sourcing funding for BSWA to increase their programs for BVI people of all ages in WA, helping them access sports and recreation activities. Raquelle is a dedicated advocate of vision-impaired children learning Braille and a fierce advocate for BVI people of all ages to have access to sport and recreation of their choice as she believes that such access increases a person’s health and well-being across all aspects of life, including mental health, physical health and overall happiness.

### 12c Looking to the future. Building Australia’s next Paralympians through the ParaSTART and APAP programs

11:30am – 12:00pm

**Presenters:** Emma Beckman and Sean Tweedy, University of Queensland

**Biography**

**Emma Beckman** is a Teaching and Research academic at the University of Queensland. Emma is passionate about engaging in research to improve the lives of people with a disability through sports, physical activity, and exercise. Following a master’s degree in Adapted physical activity, Emma completed her PhD in strength assessment for classification in Para Sport. She is currently a co-investigator in the UQ IPC Classification Research Partnership, and an internationally accredited classifier in Para Athletics.

Through her Para Sport research, Dr Beckman has seen the power of collaborative care and is committed to research that uses collaborative care models to improve health outcomes. She has undertaken projects to evaluate the impact of interprofessional education and practice on students, educators and clients and has adapted this work for different populations, including people with disabilities and university students with mental health issues.

**Sean Tweedy** is a Professor at the University of Queensland and leads the Para Sport and Adapted Physical Activity Research Group in the School of Human Movement and Nutrition Sciences, University of Queensland. Through his applied research program he aims to generate the knowledge required to empower people with disabilities to pursue self-directed goals through safe, effective engagement in sport and physical activity. Sean’s research addresses three main areas of need:

* People with disabilities are among the most inactive people in society and consequently have a disproportionately high incidence of preventable diseases.
* Para athletes have impairments which adversely affect sports performance, but the extent to which performance is affected varies greatly with some athletes having impairments that cause severe disadvantage in sport and others that cause relatively minor disadvantage.
* In Australia, the right of people with disability to participate in sport and recreation is protected but only if the accommodations they require - equipment and/or expertise - are deemed to be "reasonable”.

Sean’s research program aims to develop, evaluate and translate methods for safe, effective engagement in physically demanding, competitive sport for people with severe disabilities and high support needs. ParaSTART is his flagship program in this area - https://habs.uq.edu.au/parastart

## Session 13: Innovative Approaches (Zoom in Online)

### 13a Innovating inclusive education: Introducing Reach & Match light and braille number tiles for children with visual impairments

10:30am – 11:00am

**Presenter:** Mandy Lau, Reach & Match

#### Abstract

The Reach & Match Inclusive Education Kit was originally developed to address the urgent need for accessible, multisensory educational tools for children with visual impairments and other disabilities. Grounded in extensive research and a commitment to inclusive education, the kit integrates tactile, auditory, and kinaesthetic learning strategies to support the development of essential skills, particularly within the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC). Over the past decade, Reach & Match has gained widespread recognition for its effectiveness in promoting social inclusion, interactive engagement, and comprehensive learning outcomes in both developed and developing contexts. The success of Reach & Match is attributed to its versatile design, which allows educators, therapists, and families to customise the kit to meet the diverse needs of children with varying abilities. The program has been implemented worldwide and is endorsed by Australian Government DFAT, adopted by international organisations such as UNICEF and Save the Children, providing critical support to children in crisis-affected areas.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to a shortage of services for children with disabilities and increased demand for tools suitable for small-class applications, the newly developed Reach & Match Light Kit and Braille Number Tiles were introduced. These enhanced, portable tools are tailored for Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVIs), therapists, and families. The Light Kit’s compact design retains the core features of the original, offering more flexible and accessible learning experiences. The Braille Number Tiles, designed for pre-braille learning, specifically enhance numeracy skills, providing a strong foundation for early math concepts. Participants in this session will gain valuable insights into how these tools support the development of ECC skills, foster interactive and engaging learning experiences, and contribute to advancing inclusive education globally. By engaging with these resources, vision professionals will be equipped to ensure that every child has the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive.

#### Biography

**Mandy Lau** is an award-winning designer and social entrepreneur dedicated to transforming the lives of children with disabilities through inclusive education. Driven by a passion for empowering through the power of play, Mandy designed the Reach & Match Inclusive Education Kit to address the challenges faced by children with disabilities, fostering learning and social inclusion. Her work has reached tens of thousands of children, in partnership with UNICEF and Save the Children. Recognised with the Westpac Social Change Fellowship, Mandy focuses on advancing educational equity for all children, continuing to innovate tools that make a lasting impact.

### 13b EmPOWERment via math accessibility through digital access in WORD and AI: Using UEB math, braille displays, and screen readers for connection, inclusion and education

11:00am – 11:30am

**Presenter:** Denise Robinson, TechVision

#### Abstract

In this presentation, we will explore the innovative use of Unified English Braille (UEB) for advanced mathematics using digital platforms, focusing on how blind and visually impaired students can effectively engage with and complete all levels of maths—from basic arithmetic to advanced subjects like algebra, calculus, etc. This session will demonstrate the integration of braille displays and screen readers, such as JAWS and NVDA, with Microsoft Office and specialized apps like MathKicker.ai. Participants will learn how digital UEB Math, when used with braille displays, allows for tactile reading of mathematical content. Braille displays offer the unique advantage of allowing students to feel mathematical symbols and notations, fostering a deeper understanding of the material.

Moreover, the presentation will highlight the role of screen readers in offering auditory access to math content. With tools like JAWS and NVDA, students can have mathematical equations and notations read aloud, facilitating learning for those who rely on auditory input. This capability is particularly beneficial for students who may prefer or require auditory methods to verify their understanding of content.

Additionally, we will introduce MathKicker.ai, a cutting-edge online free tool designed to convert PDF, images or printed math content into accessible digital formats. This technology, combined with screen readers and braille displays, empowers students to engage with math content at all levels. Whether it's basic operations or complex theoretical problems, blind students can leverage these digital means to fully participate in all areas of mathematics education.

This presentation aims to demonstrate how these technologies bridge the gap in math education, ensuring that blind and visually impaired students are included with peers and can achieve their full potential. Join us to discover how modern access technologies are transforming the educational landscape, providing equal opportunities for all students to excel in mathematics.

#### Biography

**Dr. Denise M. Robinson** is an accomplished educator and expert in access technology, specializing in teaching blind and visually impaired students. With a passion for inclusion, Dr. Robinson has revolutionized the educational experience for these students through the use of advanced tools such as screen readers, braille displays, and specialized software. Her work at YourTechVision.com focuses on providing individualized instruction in technology, braille, and other essential skills, enabling students to achieve academic success and independence. Dr. Robinson's efforts have made a significant impact, promoting equal opportunities in education and beyond.

### 13c Hands on maths - Not just for juniors!

11:30am – 12:00pm

**Presenters:** Carolyn Bawden and Kylie Rattray, South Australian School & Services for Vision Impaired

#### Abstract

The presentation will demonstrate how the use of targeted effective tactile diagrams/manipulatives can be used to teach/reinforce specific areas of the Maths curriculum for advance learners with blindness or low vision (BLV) including those in remote or rural areas. Research has shown that effective tactile learning strategies and methodologies can enhance learning for students with BLV. ‘Manipulatives help students learn by allowing them to move from concrete experiences to abstract reasoning’ (Heddens, 1986; Reisman, 1982; Ross and Kurtz, 1993). In 2023/2024, SASSVI conducted a series of teaching/learning sprints across all primary year levels on Number Sense, creating definable and actionable tasks to achieve the goals set. As BLV students explore and manipulate tactile materials, their powers of observation, judgement and reasoning develop. Manipulating objects such as pattern making also helps to build fine motor coordination and spatial awareness. These sprints highlighted the importance of meaningful tactile resources where BLV students working together can represent their ideas in more than one way as they talk about what they are exploring, adding to concept development.

As BLV learners progress through high school the sheer volume of large print (LP) or braille texts they are presented with increases exponentially. With advances in Access Technologies and an increase in students preferring to access digital versions of curriculum texts, what are we doing to ensure age-appropriate tactual resources are available for the representation of diagrams, graphs and tables? The presentation will address concerns often arising in high schools with more complex concept learning particularly in STEM subjects such as mathematics and provide examples of how to equip BLV students with the toolkit to support tactile learning/graphics.

Through many conversations between experienced Specialist Teachers in vision, SSOs and Formatting specialists, SASSVI has been exploring the production of tactile graphics supplements to curriculum texts, to ensure students accessing information electronically also have tactual information at their fingertips. We must strive to demonstrate effective use of tactual resources to support mathematical concept learning for non-visual learners and not just have them audio described.

#### Biography

**Carolyn Bawden** has had over 20 years’ experience teaching mainstream secondary Sciences, Mathematics & PE/OE prior to accepting a PE teaching position at SA School & Services for Vision Impaired (SASSVI) in 2009. Carolyn has been at SASSVI for the past 16 years in multiple roles including teaching primary, junior secondary & modified SACE, teaching within two high school vision support units and as a specialist PE teacher. In 2022, Carolyn was recommended for the Advanced Skills Teacher 2 classification. Carolyn is currently a Specialist Teacher, Vision with the Statewide Support Service supporting Blind & Low Vision students across South Australia.

**Kylie Rattray** is a specialist teacher for vision impaired students at the SA School & Services for Vision Impaired (SASSVI). Kylie began her teaching career in 2024, at SASSVI. Prior to this year, Kylie worked as a School Support Officer at Brighton Secondary School supporting students with additional needs for 6 years including students with a vision impairment. Kylie's areas of expertise include Physical Education, general curriculum differentiation, and modifying educational programs to meet the needs of students. She is also knowledgeable about the Modified SACE (South Australian Certificate of Education) and has written programs for those students she was supporting at Brighton Secondary School. Kylie is dedicated to creating positive career pathways for students with vision impairment.

## Session 14 LIVES MEETING (Level 6 Seminar Room 3)

12:00pm – 1:00pm

## Concurrent Sessions 15 - 20

## Session 15: Art and Life Ready Games (Ground Floor Auditorium)

### 15a Portraits in the Dark - Visual art for students with complex needs

1:00pm – 1:30pm

**Presenter:** Lee Strickland, Narbethong State Special School

#### Abstract

Could you create a self-portrait having never seen a face, or even touched one before? In 2023, Narbethong Special School introduced Visual Art as part of the Australia Curriculum with a unit on Self-Portraits. With a cohort ranging from students who can walk and talk to those who have restricted movement and utilise alternate forms of communication, a program was designed and presented over the course of six months to create accessible opportunities for all students to engage in and thrive when creating their literal, physical self-portraits.

Using a plethora of Active Learning strategies, students engaged in learning different concepts including directional perceptions and spatial awareness, texture comparisons, exploring emotions and their direct connection to physical movement. The program integrated several technologies and resources to create functional and meaningful experiences which included PODDs, PIAF Tactile Printing, five-step sequencers, ‘Mr Potato Heads’, dolls, dress ups and Make the Face (re-invented accessible version of pin the tail on the donkey game). Students explored different art-based methods such as collage, paper-mache, clay, textured paint and material resources. Teachers were asked to cut their own hair, giving students the opportunity to explore and compare hair of their teachers.

Narbethong held their first ever sensory and touch-based Arts Exhibition at the end of the program titled Portraits in the Dark. True to its name, visitors were given a torch to enter the exhibition to find, explore and engage with artworks, some of which were auditory activated. A short film was presented demonstrating how students in this community were empowered with choice and control to create their artworks. This presentation will share the planning and progress of the Visual Art unit to inspire others to step outside their comfort zones and dare to be creative. Pictures, videos and hands on examples of artworks will be presented.

#### Biography

**Lee Strickland** has been working in the field of Vision Impairment for fifteen years. Lee is the Specialist VI Music and Arts Teacher at Narbethong Special School and the Founder/Director of Dotted Beats Pty Ltd, a small business supporting children and adults in all areas of development and employment through music. Lee is well known for her unique, innovative and ‘out of the box’ creativity when creating and implementing programs for students who are blind or have low vision with additional complex needs. In recent years, Lee has incorporated additional subject areas within The Arts Curriculum into her classroom teaching programs and enjoys the challenge of creating accessible and meaningful experiences for all her students. An engaging presenter who is passionate about building capabilities and confidence, and supporting and inspiring colleagues, educators and parents, Lee is a life-long learner and acknowledges that it takes a village to raise a child.

### 15b Can touch this: Centering the blind spectator in contemporary art

1:30pm – 2:00pm

**Presenter:** Danni Zuvela, Artistic Director of the ACE Gallery, Adelaide, South Australia

Biography

**Danni Zuvela** is an experienced curator and arts leader; the artistic director of the Adelaide Contemporary Experimental (ACE), co-director of Gold Coast Rainbow Communities, and co-founded Gold Coast Pride Festival in 2020. Prior to this, Dr Zuvela was Artistic Co-Director of Liquid Architecture (2013-2019), Australia’s leading organisation for artists working with sound, and has curated hundreds of programs of experimental art, performance and music. She has worked extensively in the Australian experimental arts sector, presenting academic research, publishing art criticism and contributing expertise as a peer at Creative Australia.

Zuvela has worked on major projects for the National Gallery of Victoria, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney Opera House, Institute of Modern Art, North Norwegian Art Centre and the Tate Britain. Through research, critical writing, residencies, exhibitions, discursive public programs and publications, Zuvela engages with artists and non-artists in the production of relationships and the exchange of knowledge. With a background in experimental music and performance, her practice uses research and ideas to fuel experiences and encounters where the natural world is often a protagonist.

### 15c Life Ready Games - Online games for young people

2:00pm – 2:30pm

**Presenters:** Lara Anderson, Vision Australia; and Reuben Moorehouse, Noble Steed Games

#### Abstract

This presentation will present Life Ready Games, an initiative by Vision Australia and Noble Steed Games to create online games for early primary school age children with low vision or blindness to learn more about the nine areas of the expanded core curriculum and create a fun way to encourage independence in this age group. The app is currently available on the Apple app store and Google Play Store. At this stage we have developed two of the nine games and are looking for feedback to help us in refining the current games and developing more in the future.

**Biography**

**Lara Anderson** is an occupational therapist who is in the role of Clinical Development Lead, Children and Young People at Vision Australia. Her passions are early intervention services, working with children with complex needs and visual impairment, use of outcome measures in low vision and lighting to improve function.

**Reuben Moorehouse** is a firm believer that the games industry is a place for all. His purpose is to make a games industry that everybody can be a part of, from individuals to businesses. Reuben’s journey started when he moved to Silicon Valley a few weeks after getting my Bachelor of Computer Science. He created a number of bespoke demos to show to investors and fell for the startup lifestyle, moving back to Sydney to found companies and foster innovation. Now, as Founder of No Moss Studios, he works to create, innovate and iterate on games, technology and innovation itself. Since starting No Moss Studios, he has worked with a number of clients around Sydney and Australia, delivering excellence in our projects, and earning a place in the ANZ Game Developers 30 Under 30 for 2018.

## Session 16: Workshops (Level 6 Seminar Room 3)

### 16a Workshop - The learning through play experience tool

1:00pm – 1:45pm

**Presenters:** Marie Oddoux and Marc Angelier, The Braille Program, LEGO Foundation

#### Abstract

The LEGO Foundation has developed a tool to observe children’s play experiences. Children who can’t see may not necessarily show the same behaviours as sighted children. Their reactions may have different meanings compared to those of sighted children. Therefore, it is especially important for facilitators to become good play observers. Using the observation grid during the workshop, you will be able to dynamically code the state of play of visually impaired children you observe on video. This knowledge will help you to observe, reflect on and improve children's play experiences in the future. With a shared understanding of what good quality play looks like, facilitators and designers can create environments where children around the world, including blind children, have access to quality learning through play experiences.

#### Biography

**Marie Oddoux** is an occupational therapist specialised in braille and visual impairment. She has a degree in low vision rehabilitation. Her first professional experience was working with children with multiple disabilities for about ten years. With more than 20 years of experience in the field of blindness, she wrote books for children and inclusive methods to learn through touch. She is a strong advocate for Braille and travels the world on training missions, particularly on inclusive education and visual impairment. She believes in the power of play, of learning through play for all children! Since 2019, with Marc Angelier, she is in charge of the creation and implementation of the global LEGO® Braille Bricks inclusive educational concept for the LEGO Foundation.

Staunch defender of braille, co-author of tactile books for blind children and specialized teaching methods, **Marc Angelier** travels the world training teachers in pedagogical techniques specific to visual impairment to make inclusive schooling for all a reality! He participates in research studies and training programs to increase students with disabilities’ accessibility to education. Since 2019, he is, with Marie Oddoux, in charge of the development and implementation of the inclusive LEGO Braille Bricks concept for the LEGO Foundation. This amazing concept allows visually impaired children from all over the world to learn braille and develop the breadth of skills they will need for the future.

### 16b Inclusive education for blind children in the Solomon Islands (online workshop)

1:45pm – 2:30pm

**Presenters:** Eddie Babanisi and Emma Vakabu, Blind and Visually Impaired People of Solomon Islands (BVIPSI)

#### Abstract

Over the years, blind and visually impaired children in the Solomon Islands have faced an uphill battle of accessing education. Due to the lack of inclusive policies, schools have not been inclusive for these children to receive education. This presentation shares of the journey that blind children have faced in their struggles to access education. It also outlines the success stories of some blind people who have become successful in their journey of life and how they have given back their time and commitment for the future of other blind children. It also tells the listeners of how these successful people have established an organisation which has today become the voice of many blind people in the Solomon Islands. BVIPSI works in advocating for changes in the Solomon Islands education system. In advocating, for changes, members are using the UNCRPD as a tool.

#### Biography

**Eddie Babanisi** graduated with the Bachelor of Laws from the University of the South Pacific in 2020. He also graduated with Post-diploma in Legal practice in 2021. Prior to graduating from law school, Eddie worked with the Solomon Islands Ministry of Health under the CBR program as a rehab officer. His role specifically was to rehabilitate people who are blind and visually impaired. One of the roles he played that stood out was to teach blind children to read and write braille with computer and the JAWS software. He also worked with schools to mainstream children who are blind and low vision.

**Emma Hambalu** was educated in Fiji. She attended Fiji school for the Blind from year 1 to year 8. She attended the DAV girls' College year 9 to year 12. She then returned to the Solomon Islands where she currently teaches Braille to children who are blind at the Redcross Special centre.

## Session 17: Poster Presentations (Ground Floor Foyer)

### 17a Mapping Guide Dogs Queensland’s holiday mobility camps onto the ECC

1:00pm – 1:30pm

**Presenter:** Jessica McLeod, Guide Dogs Queensland

#### Abstract

The Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) is an essential part of teaching students with a vision impairment, extending beyond academic subjects to address crucial learning areas and ensure equitable opportunities for all students.

Guide Dogs’ Queensland (GDQ) conducts school holiday mobility camps to bring young people from rural and remote Queensland to the GDQ Brisbane campus. Orientation and mobility specialists (O&Ms) work to equip and empower these young people with the tools to develop skills in the nine areas of the ECC. These holiday mobility camps combine socialisation and fun so that peers support one another in similar age groups. Students’ goals and future aspirations serve as a basis for camp activities. The week-long camps culminate in a group activity that pushes students out of their comfort zone and encourages them to use skills learnt throughout the week.

Holiday mobility camp activities conducted during 2023 and 2024 were mapped onto the nine life skill areas in the ECC and are outlined below:

1. Compensatory academic: use of different modes of communication e.g. reading the weeks’ timeline using Braille or VoiceOver.
2. Social interaction: opportunity to meet other students.
3. Recreation and leisure: engaging with Goalball QLD, having board game nights, and movie nights with adaptations made to the games and movies.
4. Orientation and mobility: focus on public transport and independent mobility.
5. Assistive technology: use of apps.
6. Self-determination: self-advocacy at activities and personal management throughout the week.
7. Sensory efficiency: monocular training
8. Independent living skills: students are encouraged to help set the table, cook dinner etc.
9. Career education: workforce panels

This presentation demonstrates how GDQ school holiday mobility camps integrate the nine ECC areas to ensure equitable opportunities for rural students and equip young people with crucial learning for later life development.

#### Biography

**Jessica McLeod** was a member of the Australian delegation to attend the Conference of States Parties 12 and 16 on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at the United Nations in New York. She is an orientation and mobility specialist, researcher, early childhood and primary teacher and received a Queensland University of Technology (QUT) postgraduate research scholarship to undertake a higher degree investigating how the rights of children with disabilities are upheld at school. She is currently working at Guide Dogs Queensland as an orientation and mobility and technology specialist, and team leader on the school holiday mobility camps for children with a vision impairment across Queensland, Australia.

### 17b Empowering STEM Learning through inclusive braille-based technologies

1:30pm – 2:00pm

**Presenter:** Rajeev Joshi, Chapman University

#### Abstract

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education is crucial for developing problem-solving skills, critical thinking, and creativity, which are key competencies for future careers. However, children with blindness and visual impairments often miss out on the full benefits of STEM learning due to limited access to specialized educational tools, resulting in significant gaps in both STEM skills and Braille literacy. According to the National Braille Press, despite 80% of children with blindness and visual impairments attending mainstream schools, Braille literacy remains low due to limited instruction and a shortage of qualified teachers.

Technological advancements, particularly refreshable Braille displays (RBDs), offer a promising solution by providing interactive, digital Braille content. However, a significant gap remains in integrating tactile, graphic, and audio-based learning content specifically designed for tactile displays to support STEM education. Our research aims to address this gap by developing and testing interactive STEM games specifically designed for children with blindness and visual impairments. Central to our work is BLISS (Braille Letters and Interactive Shape Screen), a custom-designed, portable, and affordable RBD with an 8x8 pin configuration that displays both Braille letters and shapes, offering a practical educational tool for students and educators. To support STEM education, we’ve developed an online platform that integrates BLISS with interactive STEM games. The platform connects BLISS to any device with a web app, allowing users to engage with STEM content through tactile feedback and a text-to-speech feature that will enable students to navigate the app independently. Additionally, we are utilizing AI-driven image classification to improve the accuracy of shapes displayed on BLISS. Overall, we aim to enhance STEM learning and promote Braille literacy, ensuring that children with blindness and visual impairments receive the same quality education and opportunities as their sighted peers.

#### Biography

**Dr. Rajeev Joshi** obtained his Ph.D. in Computer Science and Engineering from the University of South Florida, Tampa, in 2023. During his doctoral studies, he developed optimization techniques for machine learning inference and near-memory image processing in hardware for highly constrained IoT edge nodes. Currently, he is pursuing a research direction in embedded systems, focusing on the design and development of a compact and affordable refreshable Braille display device for early education for individuals with blindness and visual impairments. His research interests lie at the intersection of VLSI design, Computer Architecture, Machine Learning, In-Memory Computing, and Image Processing, with the goal of developing efficient and intelligent edge AI systems for smart embedded systems and IoT applications.

### 17c Hand movement in braille and tactile graphic reading for students with VI

2:00pm – 2:30pm

**Presenter:** Sandra Tsoenemawu Sikanku

#### Abstract

Hand and finger movements are crucial for individuals with visual impairments (VI) when reading braille and interpreting tactile graphics. Unlike their sighted peers who rely on their visual sense, people with VI, including those who are blind or have low vision, use tactile methods. The ability to read braille and interpret tactile graphics is considered vital for literacy and success in science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics (STEM). Despite this, students with VI are not well-represented in STEM fields. A systematic review following the PRISMA guidelines will be conducted to identify existing research on hand movement in braille and tactile graphic reading for students with VI. The findings of this study will have both theoretical and practical implications for the instruction of students with VI.

#### Biography

**Sandra Tsoenemawu Sikanku** is a 3rd-year PhD student specializing in Special Education with a concentration in blindness and visual impairment within the Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology and Special Education at the University of British Columbia. Her research interests include Orientation and Mobility (O&M), Braille Literacy, and Assistive Technology.

## Session 18: Teacher and Parent Perspectives (Ground Floor Auditorium)

### 18a Help! I have a blind student in my music class! – support for teachers and teacher aides

3:00pm – 3:30pm

**Presenters:** Lee Strickland, Narbethong State Special School; and Lily Gower, South Australian School for Vision Impairment

#### Abstract

Have you ever wondered why music is taught to students who cannot read the notes, are unable to use their voice to sing lyrics and have restricted body movement making playing an instrument near impossible? It must just be for their social and emotional enjoyment, right? WRONG!

With over forty years combined experience teaching music in schools for students with Vision and Hearing Impairments, Intellectual Disabilities and/or additional complex needs, Music Specialists Lucy Standish, Lily Gower and Lee Strickland want to share with you why music is a multi-faceted power subject that supports all students multi-disciplinary learning. These three passionate educators from South Australia and Queensland will share with you their knowledge on how to create meaningful and accessible music experiences of which will include: modifying and adapting traditional musical instruments, use of alternate communication systems, low vision strategies, braille music and accessible technologies, curriculum adjustments, lesson plans, and so much more! Volunteers from the audience will be asked to join us to break down and identify the steps required to achieve a student’s goal and how to apply this in music class settings. This presentation will also include video and photo evidence, and live demonstrations of how to adapt learning concepts with everyday resources.

Whether supporting a child with complex sensory and intellectual disabilities to bang a drum or teaching a young blind composer the skills needed to study at the conservatorium – music education is empowering for all.

#### Biography

Experience Senior Teacher, **Lee Strickland,** has worked in the field of Vision Impairment for fifteen years. Lee is a Specialist VI Music and Arts Teacher at Narbethong Special School and has previously worked as the Low Vision and Braille Music Arts Advisor for Statewide Vision Impairment Services Queensland. A strong believer in Dr Lily Nielson’s Active Learning Philosophy and Neuroplasticity, Lee uses her immense knowledge of disability and the magic of music to focus on individual developmental goals that refine fine and gross motor development, communication, creativity and musicianship. In 2019 Lee was one of four national finalists flown to Sydney for the ARIA Music Teacher of the Year Award. A life-long learner, Lee is passionate about building support networks and sharing knowledge in this unique area of Vision Impairment and Music Education.

Nationally Accredited Highly Accomplished Teacher, **Lily Gower**, has taught at the South Australian School and Services for Vision Impaired for 15 years. Lily has worked as a classroom teacher, a state-wide vision support teacher and a music and creative arts specialist teacher. Lily was awarded the Ministers Arts Education Award in 2019 which gave her the opportunity to travel to Auckland, New Zealand and be mentored by PHD Wendy Richards in braille music pedagogy and music access technology. Lily is passionate about providing innovative arts lessons to fully support the participation of students with diverse access needs. When she's not teaching, she enjoys playing saxophone in her funk band, Circa 74.

### 18b My empowering journey: Life with Lily, Andy and Eddie

3:30pm – 4:00pm

**Presenter:** Gemma Gatehouse, parent

#### Abstract

I will discuss my journey as a parent of three children who are blind; how we felt, our challenges, our day-to-day life, our supports, our team, what works, what doesn’t work and how we spend our days with the children including any adaptations we’ve had to make. I would like to give the audience a chance to ask questions and build up a conversation from a mother’s perspective who is living with three blind children. My session would be interactive, interesting and coming from real lived experiences. I am very passionate and positive about my children, which I believe would be beneficial to both educators and other parents participating in the conference. For me, it has never been about a cure, but about making sure the world they live in is built the best it can be for my children.

#### Biography

My name is Gemma, and I am a mother to 3 completely blind children. My journey began just over 8 years ago when my first daughter was born. After many tests, we were told she has LCA (leber congenital amarosis), and each subsequent child we had would have a 25% chance of the same. For us, despite all the challenges, emotions and extra work it was worth the risk. We went on to have another child 2.5 years later, also with a diagnosis of LCA; and a more recent further diagnosis of autism (level 3, non-verbal, developmental delays). Three years later our ‘surprise’ third child was born with LCA. If given the opportunity to present at the SPEVI conference I will discuss my journey from the beginning to now.

## Session 19: Workshop (Level 6 Seminar Room 3)

### 19 Open forum - Strategies and tools for students with BLV to be safe and savvy online

3:00pm – 4:00pm

**Presenters**: Phia Damsma, Sonokids Australia; John Norgaard, Sonokids; Rob Cantle, University of Southern Queensland; and Craig Cashmore, PeppaCode

#### Abstract

We are looking to facilitate an open forum session to exchange ideas and share perspectives, concerns and recommendations around students with blindness and low vision (BLV) being safe and savvy online. Twenty-five years ago, Sonokids developed ‘Radar the Eargame’, an educational software game using an engaging audio story and interactive ‘missions’ to educate students with BLV about ‘Safe Surfing’. Back then, the internet was relatively new, the ‘Google’ search engine had just been invented. ‘RadaR’ mainly made young students aware of stranger danger online and the importance of keeping personal information private, as well as ways to navigate, search online, and analysing the results.

Fast forward, and the internet connects us all, making technology an ever-increasing enabler for access to information for students with BLV. Social media, mobile smart technologies with built-in accessibility, and apps, including Artificial Intelligence agents such as ChatGPT, put a multitude of options for online engagement at everybody’s fingertips. Staying safe and being savvy is still as important as ever. Admittedly, ‘eSafety’ (preventing scams, bullying, identity theft) and ‘Media Literacy’ (recognising and understanding spreading of misinformation and influencing) are relevant to all students. Most schools in Australia have an anti-bullying program and ‘Cybersafe’ resources as part of the education curriculum, and Government campaigns give the public important, basic tips. However, generic advise may not always be usable or accessible. And professionals we spoke to agree that there may be specific issues affecting technology users with BLV that are not addressed in current resources. These issues may be due to students’ use of assistive technology and particular apps, to them potentially being perceived by others as more vulnerable, or because of them having to rely on non-visual information only to detect any intent of wrongdoing.

 We invite you to come and share your stories, bespoke resources tips, concerns, and experiences from students and other technology users with BLV, to inspire an open discussion around ‘Media Literacy’ and ‘eSafety’ for students with BLV. Is it time for a new ‘RadaR’, or are we doing enough for students with BLV to stay safe and savvy online? What do YOU think?

To be able to collect information about current knowledge, we will be collating information from this session for future research and product development. Your participation in research is voluntary. All responses will be anonymised and collected inline with UniSQ ethical approval #ETH2024-1080. For more information, please see the Participant Information Sheet available in the session or online. [www.sonokids.org/esafety-survey](http://www.sonokids.org/esafety-survey). You may also like to fill out the 3-minute survey.

#### Biography

**Phia Damsma** is Co-Founder and Creative Director of Sonokids Australia, celebrating 25 years developing ‘Ballyland’ educational software and game apps that support learning of essential technology skills by students who are blind and have low vision. Phia is Co-President of SPEVI Inc., member of the ‘Sonification World Chat’ (SWC), an international, multi-disciplinary group for accessible sonification and Lead of the SWC Working Group ‘Learn’. (Co)author of academic publications, presenter for national and international audiences, Phia is always looking for new ways to support safe, confident use of current and emergent technologies by young students with BLV, for equity of access.

**John Norgaard** is Co-Founder and Chief Programmer of Sonokids, celebrating 25 years developing ‘Ballyland’ educational software and game apps that support learning of essential technology skills by students who are blind and have low vision. Starting of as a classroom teacher in Denmark, John’s professional career encompasses work on national TV and radio, and as an entertainer. John is also Sonokids’ sound engineer. His studio facilitates all Sonokids’ audio-visual creation and editing. He is a successful song writer, recording artist, and musician, playing multiple instruments. John is also known as ‘the voice of Ballyland’.

**Craig Cashmore** is the Founder and Director of PeppaCode, a web and app development business focused on 'out-of-the-ordinary' strategic web and software development for small business, start-ups and educational institutions. Craig has worked closely with Sonokids Australia for the last 8 years assisting with the programming of their educational apps for young students with BLV. Craig's other achievements in BLV include UEB Online, an online braille training program. Craig continues to work on new and innovative projects using modern technologies.

**Rob Cantle** is an educator and researcher specialising in digital technologies in education, with a focus on Digital Literacies. Over the past five years, he has worked as a lecturer and researcher in Initial Teacher Education (ITE), covering all aspects of quality teaching and pedagogy. As a Head of Department, Rob has led whole-school initiatives in digital education, encompassing devices, tools, software, pedagogy, and curriculum. He is currently finalising his PhD on the digital literacies of pre-service teachers and has co-authored several published articles as part of successful research teams studying digital literacies in teachers and students.

## Session 20: CVI and Explicit Direct Instruction (Zoom in Online)

### 20a How to use the Austin Assessment: From screening for CVI related visual issues through to guiding practice

3:00pm – 3:30pm

**Presenter**: Nicola McDowell, Massey University

#### Abstract

Cerebral visual impairment (CVI) is the leading cause of vision impairment in children in the economically developed world with a prevalence rate of 3.4% in mainstream education. The visual issues associated with CVI can be grouped into two areas, the basic visual functions (acuity, field, colour, contrast) and the higher order visual functions, which are commonly referred to as visual perceptual abilities.

In most instances, children with issues with their basic visual functions are easier to identify and assess. However, for children with visual perceptual difficulties, identification and assessment can be challenging. This is resulting in many children with CVI related visual issues struggling in classroom environments, undiagnosed and unable to access the learning material and experiences.

The Austin Assessment App is a validated screening app for CVI related visual issues, specifically visual perceptual difficulties. The app was designed to be used in a range of contexts, including personal use (families), schools, vision educators, therapists, clinicians and researchers. In addition to screening for CVI related visual issues, the Austin Assessment can also be used to help guide what strategies and supports a child with CVI might need.

In this presentation, Dr McDowell will provide an overview of the Austin Assessment, including the research that was undertaken to validate the app. Using a case study approach, Dr McDowell will then demonstrate how the Austin Assessment works, the key indicators of visual perceptual difficulties it can identify and how the results from the assessment can be used to help guide practice. One of the most important principles of the Austin Assessment is that is fun and engaging for children and empowering for parents, educators and therapists. The app can help ensure that all children with CVI related visual issues are identified and supported effectively, so that they have every opportunity to succeed.

#### Biography

**Dr Nicola McDowell** is the founder and creator of the Austin Assessment, a screening app for cerebral visual impairment related visual issues, and a Senior Lecturer and researcher in the Institute of Education, Massey University, New Zealand. Nicola teaches into the Post Graduate Diploma and Masters in Specialist Teaching programmes, which focus on training educators to work in the learning support space in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Her research interests include understanding and supporting children and young people who have cerebral visual impairment, empowerment of children and their parents/caregivers and equity in education.

### 20b Fluency at your fingertips: the power of reading

3:30pm – 4:00pm

**Presenters:** Skye Jones and Skye Wittwer, SA Schools and Services for Vision Impaired

#### Abstract

Join us for an engaging and informative session where we unveil the power of Explicit Direct Instruction (EDI) in enhancing reading, fluency and comprehension for students who are blind and vision impaired at SA School and Services for Vision Impaired. Our presentation will share the theoretical foundations underpinning our approach to developing fluency in braille, large print, and e-text readers at SA School and Services for Vision Impaired (SASSVI). We will share practical applications that have proven successful and highlight data collected from Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) assessments and the York Assessment of Reading for Comprehension (YARC), illustrating the impact of EDI on student performance. We will demonstrate how tactile graphics can be incorporated into reading activities to support concept development, mapping, and mathematical skills.

Participants will gain insights into the selection and development of reading texts that cater to a wide range of learning needs, ensuring inclusivity and engagement for all students. We will present examples of instructional plans and programs that have been instrumental in driving literacy improvements. These examples will include step-by-step guides on setting clear learning objectives, delivering systematic and explicit instruction, and conducting ongoing assessments to monitor progress.

We will share our successes and challenges encountered in implementing EDI for students at SASSVI. Educators attending this session will leave equipped with a deeper appreciation of how EDI can revolutionise reading instruction and fluency development for all students, inclusive of those with vision impairment. Join us to discover how daily fluency routines can elevate your literacy teaching practices and improve student reading and learning outcomes.

#### Biography

**Skye Jones** is a highly accomplished specialist teacher for vision impaired students at SA School and Services for Vision Impaired (SASSVI). With 20 years teaching experience, Skye is an expert in braille literacy and curriculum differentiation. Passionate about sharing knowledge, Skye has presented at many SPEVI conferences, the Tactile Reading Conference in Stockholm in 2017, and attended the Getting in Touch with Literacy Conference in Florida, 2023. Skye's dedication to improving education for vision impaired students makes her an invaluable asset to the teaching community.

**Skye Wittwer** is a dynamic specialist teacher for vision impaired students at the SA School and Services for Vision Impaired (SASSVI). Beginning her teaching career at SASSVI five years ago, she holds a Masters in Disability (Vision Impairment). Her areas of expertise include Braille literacy, individualised braille programs, and general differentiation of the curriculum. Skye is meticulous in her planning and resources, ensuring each student's unique needs are met. This is Skye’s first presentation at a SPEVI conference, highlighting her commitment to enhancing education for vision impaired students making her a true trailblazer in her profession.

## Session 21 SPEVI Biennial General Meeting (Ground Floor Auditorium)

4:00pm – 5:00pm

# Wednesday 15th January 2025 (Day 3)

## Session 22: Plenary (Ground Floor Auditorium)

### Keynote address: Access to employment for people with disability, a Pacific Islands perspective

9:15am – 10:00am

**Keynote Presenter:** Mr Ben Clare, Vice President and Secretary of SPEVI, Disability Inclusion Adviser, Aspen Medical, Project Consultant, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 22 Keynote Address:

#### Biography

**f**about all aspects of disability advocacy, his work has primarily focused on the education of adults and children with vision impairment and multiple disabilities, boosting the capacity of various disability service providers and OPD’s in several Pacific Island nations and Timor-Leste.

 At this time, Ben works as a Disability Lead Adviser at Aspen Medical, among his work includes raising funds and facilitates self help projects for people with disabilities across the Pacific region. He is often called upon to advise the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on disability related policy and regularly inputs on overseas based DFAT funded initiatives and projects.

Ben held the position of Pacific Regional Chairperson for the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI) from 2016/2021 and is currently the Vice President and Secretary at South Pacific Educators in Vision Impairment (SPEVI.) He also sits on several boards and committees, including SPEVI’s Committee of Management, the Canberra Business Chamber’s Disability Working Group, Australian Volunteers International, the Australian Braille Authority and Blind Citizens Australia. In May 2024, Ben, in partnership with the Disability Rights Fund and the World Blind Union delivered in country Marrakesh Treaty training in Samoa which resulted in the drafting of a formal statement requesting the Samoan government to alter existing copyright law to enable the ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty for the benefit of Samoan citizens with print disabilities, a statement produced by leading disability advocacy groups in the country

## Concurrent Sessions 23 - 31

## Session 23: Technology (Ground Floor Auditorium)

### 23a UEB maths with NVDA, JAWS, single-line braille displays

10:30am – 11:00am

**Presenter**: Peter Cracknell, Quantum RLV

#### Abstract

With the recent integration of MathCAT in JAWS and NVDA, MathML expressions from the internet, PDFs and other documents can be spoken out, reviewed and edited in both UEB and Nemeth braille math codes using established single-line braille displays such as the Focus 40 and the Brailliant. JAWS provides a new feature called Split Braille, which allows a student to keep focus on both the question, and the answer they are composing, simultaneously. Both NVDA and JAWS provide a visual ribbon of backtranslated braille for the benefit of sighted teachers, and the JAWS Braille Math Editor also shows a preview of the maths expressions being brailled by the student. Completed expressions can be immediately entered into WORD as perfectly rendered visual maths, as if they had been composed using the WORD Equation Editor.

These advances mean that blind students can take advantage of “learning in the moment” as their sighted peers do, interacting with their science or maths teacher with conversations about the maths, not the braille. For us in Australia and New Zealand, having braille support for UEB maths (including the advanced Technical Materials) using existing equipment and Office 365, is a game-changer.

The Monarch multi-line digital tactile array offers even more possibilities for maths in the classroom. For example, simultaneous equation can be reviewed and edited on multiple lines, and graphable expressions – such as quadratics – can be physically displayed as a dynamic tactile, with audio annotations for intercepts. Work is being done on spatial maths, such as long division, addition and so on, and the imminent “braille terminal protocol” should also allow dynamic interaction with spreadsheets and other tabular arrangements of data. In this presentation, Peter Cracknell will demonstrate editing equations with both single line braille displays using JAWS and NVDA, and some of the maths features of the Monarch.

#### Biography

**Peter Cracknell** is Quantum RLV's most experienced Assistive Technology consultant, across all areas including braille, print access, deafblindness, low vision and dyslexia. Starting his career as the Disability Access Officer for English National Opera in 1989, Peter joined Telesensory UK in 1994, migrating to Sydney in 1996 and working for the Telesensory distributor, Optek Systems. Peter joined Quantum RLV in 2002 and has since then been an innovator in access technology, collaborating with all the major vision agencies and alternative format teams, and particularly focused on better outcomes for people who are blind or vision impaired in Education and Employment.

### 23b Advanced JAWS features: The path to academic and professional excellence

11:00am – 11:30am

**Presenter:** Sam Taylor, Vision Australia

#### Abstract

As students transition into the workforce, JAWS for Windows remains an indispensable software package that ensures comprehensive access to material, enabling blind students to perform at a level comparable to their sighted peers. The customisation capabilities found within JAWS are invaluable and range from place markers and custom labels, to complex scripting. These customisations allow for the adaptation of workplace applications and software to ensure full accessibility, facilitating equal participation across a diverse array of career fields, from customer service and data entry to software development and beyond.

The implementation of JAWS place markers significantly enhances efficiency within web pages and documents. Place markers enable users to set specific points of reference, simplifying the process of returning to critical information promptly, without the need to navigate a webpage or document by listening to all of its content which can be time-consuming. The Custom Labeller can make otherwise unrecognised controls accessible, which could be the difference between paying a bill, and needing to rely on somebody else to assist with or complete the task.

JAWS Scripts assist in making applications accessible or more straight-forward to use. Keystrokes can be created so that the cursor can be moved to portions of the screen where it couldn't otherwise go, or clicking a position on-screen, emulating what a sighted person can do. Time-saving routines can be scripted meaning that manual workflows which would otherwise take a student minutes can be carried out within seconds.

JAWS place markers, the Custom Labeller, and JAWS scripting constitute a powerful toolkit that helps equip blind students and professionals with the essential skills and resources required for academic success and career advancement. These features promote greater independence and equitable participation in various facets of life, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and diverse workforce, as well as helping to ensure blind students have ongoing and meaningful employment.

#### Biography

**Sam Taylor** works as an Access Technology Specialist at Vision Australia in Brisbane. This provides him with an opportunity to work with people from various demographics. However, he is particularly invested in advocating the use of speech and braille technology to empower students who are blind or have low vision.

Having previously worked for other prominent blindness organizations such as HumanWare and Pacific Vision, Sam now plays a pivotal role in ensuring that school students have access to accessible information and can excel in using the latest technology available to them. This extends to customising packages and programs with automation in different programming languages including Autohotkey, Python, and JAWS for Windows.

As a committed advocate for braille, Sam has also contributed as a member of the Australian Braille Authority, helping to shape policies and initiatives to promote and support braille literacy. Sam is also an accomplished musician and has been involved both as staff and student in many of the Braille Music Camps over the years.

### 23c Braille, Braille, and more Braille

11:30am – 12:00pm

**Presenter:** David Woodbridge, Humanware

#### Abstract

We really do have a good range of Braille devices and software to choose now from in Australia.

In this presentation I want to introduce to you a Braille teaching device, refreshable single line and multi line Braille displays, hard copy Braille printers, and in what need situations they prove their functionality.

The Annie self Braille teaching device.

From the Mantis Q40 with the QWERTY keyboard with a 40 cell Braille display, Brailliant Bi40X with a 40 /20 cell Braille display, to the Monarch multiline Tactile display.

The TactileView software for producing amazing high level hard copy tactile drawings.

Throughout the presentation I will be focusing on how you can integrate this technology with your student, and how it will benefit not only the student, but the classroom teacher and support staff as well.

#### Biography

David Woodbridge is an assistive technology specialist. David has been the National Commercial Assistive Technology Advisor for Vision Australia where he had worked since 1990 to 2024. Over this time he has assisted people who are blind or vision impaired in their home, education, and work settings to take advantage of the benefits of using assistive and main stream technology. In the last twenty years, he has also been involved with evaluating technology for use by people who are blind or vision impaired covering both low and high tech equipment (covering Microsoft, Samsung, Google, Amazon, and Apple).

David was also one of the key spoke persons for Vision Australia relating to technology. He has been an Apple Ambassador for Apple Australia since 2009 with a group of other Ambassadors/Apple Distinguished Educators (ADE'S) covering the range of Apple's Accessibility solutions throughout Australia. From 2018-2021, David was on the Microsoft Windows Narrator Board. He also ran Tech sessions for the Vision Australia Retail Store on a weekly basis, and a Monthly exploring tech webinar.

David produces a range of podcasts (since 2011) covering Apple and other technologies which are distributed on his own podcast (http://davidwoodbr.podbean.com). In addition, He also ran the regular Talking Tech program (on Vision Australia radio from 2013 to 2024. He has also spoken on various radio stations concerning technology for blind or low vision including 2GB in Sydney, 2RPH in Sydney and 4RPH in Adelaide, and ABC Radio in Queensland. David has also appeared on various podcasts including ABC Radio Main Menu, AppleVis, Blind Side, RNIB Tech Talk, The Tech Doctor Blog and Podcast, and others. In 2013, David wrote a multi-touch book: iSee: Getting the most out of Apple Products from a Blind persons Perspective. David also co-authored another multi-touch book in 2016: Accessibility At Home: which is also freely available on the iTunes Store:

David has presented at various conferences (including Spectronics in 2010 and 2012), conducted training workshops on the use of Apple Technologies (including Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind Learning about Apple Accessibility 2011, the use of iPads with speech/Braille Tasmania 2013, National Disability Insurance Scheme National Conference Queensland 2015, and Singapore Enabling Village Apple Accessibility workshop 2017), and has been written up in a number of articles including "Putting the I back in I Devices" in November 2012 which was listed on Apple's Hot News. At the Spectronics conference in 2010, David presented an unofficial launch of the iPad when it was first available in Australia.

In 2020, David participated in the Humanware/Vision Australia launch of Code Jumper, a physical means of teaching young blind or low vision children coding. David is now employed as the Blindness Product Specialist for Humanware Australia September 2024. David lost his sight when he was 8 years old and had to learn Braille. Since then, he completed high school, went to Sydney University receiving a Social Work degree, spent 4 years drug and alcohol counselling, and move into his current job.As a person who is blind, David believes that as a user of the technology that he recommends to others, that he is well situated to look at the strengths and short comings of the assistive technology that he comes across in both his professional and personal life, and mainstream technology that is accessible.

## Session 24: Deafblindness and Additional Disabilities (Level 6 Seminar Room 3)

### 24a Barriers and facilitators to including users of tactile language: making inclusion work, on the basis of understanding tactile language and cognition

10:30am – 11:00am

**Presenter:** Steve Rose, Vision Australia

#### Abstract

Children who rely on their sense of touch as a primary source of information about the world are a unique low incidence - high needs group, which includes using touch to understand and use tactile language. Many of these children are dual sensory impaired, and may be described as deafblind, there are also others with blindness and low vision who also utilise touch in the same way. There have been recent advances in the development of assessments of tactile cognition and tactile language which help to inform practitioners identification of support strategies.

This presentation will explore an overview of the dynamic assessment tools, the tactile working memory scale (Nicolas et al. 2019) and the framework for supporting learners who use bodily-tactile communication and tactile sign language (Rose 2020) and the role they play in identifying successful strategies and accommodations to build capacity in communication partnerships. We will explore how the tools work illustrated with video examples following a case example. Following these descriptions, we will discuss the impact individualised strategies has on successful inclusion. Participants will be invited to engage in discussion about the barriers and facilitators to ensure tactile mediation and tactile language is supported for those who need it including the impact this has on successful inclusion building a greater understanding of the need for action in this area.

#### Biography

**Steve Rose** is a Speech Pathologist experienced in working across different settings, within the sensory impairment space in the UK and Australia. He is currently based at Vision Australia supporting children and young adults who have blindness, low vision, and multiple disabilities including deafblindness. Steve is passionate about developing evidence-based practices focusing on parent-child interaction, early intervention and building communicative competency and an active collaborator in national and international groups focusing on tactile language and cognition.

### 24b Communication and literacy development support for students with multi disabilities VI

11:00am – 11:30am

**Presenters:** Jessie Middleton and Catriona Pine, Department of Education Queensland

#### Abstract

Jessie and Catriona will be presenting around strategies to facilitate communication and literacy development in our most complex learners - those with multiple disabilities, complex communication needs and vision impairment. These students require careful planning and thought around the robust language systems they will use and the literacy pathways they will progress through. Clear adjustments, progression tools, and resources will be presented, with application to specific student cases.

#### Biography

**Jessie Middleton** is a teacher of students who have vision impairment. She has been working with students who have a vision impairment for 8 years and has a Masters in Disability Studies specialising in Vision Impairment. In 2024 Jessie was an Advisory Visiting Teacher - Blindness and Vision Impairment in Brisbane, a classroom teacher at Narbethong State Special School and the Vision Impairment Mentor teacher at Narbethong State Special School. Jessie is an experienced teacher of students who are braille users and students who have multiple disabilities including vision impairment.

**Catriona Pine** is a Speech Language Pathologist with over 30 years of experience, predominantly in the field of complex communication. Since being allocated to Narbethong Special School 8 years ago she has dived into learning around how vision impairment and complex communication intersect. Her favourite thing is chatting and discovering the authentic voice of the students she works with, so feels that being a “speechie” is the best job around.

### 24c Tactile literacy and deafblindness - Beyond braille and sign

11:30am – 12:00pm

**Presenters:** Meredith Prain, Able Australia, and Steve Rose, Vision Australia

#### Abstract

In this presentation, we introduce new developments in tactile literacy for congenitally deafblind students. We draw on protactile theory and our experiences as researchers and practitioners working in the field in Australia and the UK.

Tactile literacy is broader than braille and tactile or touch signing and should be considered a fundamental aspect of the education of deafblind students. Tactile literacy is the ability to access information through touch. For children who are congenitally deafblind, this means having an interest in exploring the world through touch, motivation to move and curiosity to explore, developing different modes of touch to explore the properties of objects, before moving on to more formal tactile communication methods. Tactile literacy is not inherent, but rather requires directed building of skills. Protactile theory stresses the importance of touch as a way of understanding the world and creating co-presence in interaction. It argues that far more meaning and understanding about the world can be gained by deliberate touching behaviours than might initially be apparent, and that co-touching behaviour (that is touching by both deafblind and sighted individuals in the interaction) is integral to ensuring joint attention and co-presence in interactions: both key precursors for learning (Clark 2024).

We will review the recent work of Lu et al. (2024), which applied protactile theory to interventions with deafblind children, and consider how these concepts could be married with our understanding of tactile literacy and applied to the Australian context. We will close by considering the potential impact of new technologies such as 3D printing and refreshable tactile displays (RTDs).

#### Biography

**Dr Meredith Prain** has worked with people with deafblindness of all ages, and their social networks, as a speech pathologist and researcher for nearly 30 years. She completed her doctoral studies exploring interactions between adults born with deafblindness and the staff who support them in 2012. Meredith is the Head of Research and Centre of Excellence – Deafblind with Able Australia, Project Manager of Deafblind Information Australia and current Vice President of Deafblind International. She is passionate about promoting high quality interactions as critical stepping stones to genuine social inclusion.

**Steve Rose** is a Speech Pathologist experienced in working across different settings, within the sensory impairment space in the UK and Australia. He is currently based at Vision Australia supporting children and young adults who have blindness, low vision, and multiple disabilities including deafblindness. Steve is passionate about developing evidence-based practices focusing on parent-child interaction, early intervention and building communicative competency and an active collaborator in national and international groups focusing on tactile language and cognition.

## Session 25: Life and Leadership Skills (Level 6 Meeting Room)

### 25a Beyond the itinerant model: a new approach to developing independent living skills

10:30am – 11:00am

**Presenter:** Cass Embling

#### Abstract

The current itinerant model used in Australia limits people who are blind from becoming truly independent. This presentation will explore a new approach to teaching independent living skills that is adapted to the Australian context while drawing on decades of evidence from international best practices. Inspired by her recent Churchill Fellowship, Cass Embling proposes a transformative strategy that advocates for a philosophy of empowerment, structured discovery and non-visual learning.

By adopting a philosophy of empowerment, the proposed approach aims to foster a sense of confidence, comfort and self-sufficiency among individuals who are blind. The structured discovery methodology provides a systematic framework for learning, allowing participants to explore their environment, improve their ability to problem-solve and develop a generalised skillset that leads to greater independence. Non-visual learning is employed to enhance independence and confidence regardless of prognosis or situational or environmental impacts on residual vision.

#### Biography

**Cass Embling** is an advocate for improved independent living supports for people who are blind in Australia. Her personal experience of the limitations of the itinerant model, and her participation in a residential program in New Zealand, has fuelled her commitment to driving change. After receiving a Churchill Fellowship in 2023, Cass visited fourteen programs across three countries to determine best practice for teaching blind and vision impaired people independent living skills. Now, Cass is dedicated to advocating for a new approach that will fill the gaps in current supports and empower people who are blind to become truly independent.

### 25b The Life Ready Hub and the expanded core curriculum

11:00am – 11:30am

**Presenters:** Patricia Rolland and Patricia Izzard, Vision Australia

#### Abstract

This presentation offers a comprehensive overview of the Vision Australia Life Ready Hub (LRH), an innovative online learning platform designed to support children, young people, and their families. Centered around the 9 learning areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum, LRH provides valuable resources to help individuals who are blind or have low vision develop essential skills for leading independent and fulfilling lives.

We will explore how the LRH categorizes its resources into three key stages of a child's life: Early Years (Strengthening the Family Unit), Primary School Years (Opening Up the Child’s World), and High School and Beyond (Discovering the Future). The presentation will delve into the variety of educational resources available on the LRH. Each resource has been designed in a format to attract the attention of the targeted audience, including podcasts, eLearning modules, quizzes, information sheets, activities and videos.

Additionally, we will examine how these resources can be strategically utilized to enhance learning and the achievement of shared educational and life skill goals. Emphasis will be placed on practical strategies for introducing these resources in a timely fashion as new goals and learning needs are identified. The LRH aims to foster a cohesive approach with collaboration across home school and community settings.

Attendees will gain insights into the evolution of the LRH, experience a guided tour of the site and discover actionable ways to leverage its offerings for improved outcomes for young people whilst strengthening connections across various support networks.

#### Biography

**Patricia Rolland** is an Occupational Therapist who has been working in the field of vision impairment since the year 2000. She has a passionate interest in partnering with families and young people to ensure they are equipped with the resources they need to meet their goals. She currently works as a Senior Practitioner supporting other practitioners to do the same. She has played an integral role in the the development of the Life Ready Hub resources.

**Patricia Izzard** Is a Senior Practitioner at Vision Australia. She is a qualified Early Childhood Teacher who has completed a Master of Disability Studies, specialising in Education: Vision Impairment. Patricia has a dual role at Vision Australia with part of her role delivering early intervention services to families that have children with blindness or low vision. She has first hand experience introducing families to the Life Ready Hub. In her Senior Practitioner role she provides clinical supervision to other service providers and shared her expertise in the development of the Life Ready resources.

### 25c The importance of opportunities for leadership and adventure in empowering students with lived experience of blindness and low vision

11:30am – 12:00pm

**Presenter:** Debra Goodsir, NSW Department of Education

#### Abstract

It is important for all students to have opportunities to adventure, explore and have chances to be leaders. These opportunities help students to develop independence, problem solving skills, the experience of failing but trying again, and, importantly, self-belief. While many students have these opportunities in regular lives, it is sometimes more difficult for students with lived experience of blindness and low vision to access opportunities.

This presentation will discuss ways in which such opportunities can be provided to students with lived experience of blindness and low vision; and the impacts this can have on students themselves. This presentation will feature a discussion of activities and programs with which the presenter has been involved in her 17 years of teaching students with lived experience of blindness and low vision, and will include videos in which students discuss their experiences and their responses to them.

#### Biography

**Debra Goodsir** started teaching in 1986 and over those years she has learnt many things. She has lived and worked in remote, regional and small city areas, as well as overseas. Debra enjoys holidays more than she enjoys working and has recently found the time to read more books.

## Session 26: Pacific and Community (Ground Floor Auditorium)

### 26a The power of partnerships to transform lives in Tuvalu

1:00pm – 1:30pm

**Presenters:** Rosie Paueli and Annie Dares, Tetra Tech

#### Abstract

Tuvalu Australia partnership for Quality Education (TAPQE) is a transformative education program, funded by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). The program delivers a broad range of education reform activities in Primary and Secondary schools and is supporting system reform in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD). TAPQE ‘s approach is underpinned by the principles of inclusion and partnership and these guides working with children and young people, teachers, families and diverse government and non-government agencies. The program is delivered by a local team of experienced Tuvaluan educators and Technical Advisor counterparts.

The presentation will be facilitated primarily by Rosie Paulei, the local TAPQE Inclusion Coordinator and her counterpart Annie Dares Inclusion Advisor and Associate Director of Inclusive Education at Tetra Tech. Drawing on the TAPQE experience, the presentation will explore the question of what is required to broker partnerships with multiple agencies in a low resource and geographically dispersed context to support children with disabilities and specifically those who are visually impaired. It will highlight the recent introduction of teaching of Braille in Tuvalu with a focus on transformation and sustainability. Fundamental to program success has been building genuine coalitions to empower agencies such the Department of Health, Island Councils, the only Disability People organisation Fusi Alofa, parent groups and the MERHD Inclusive Education Working group to work together to support the needs of children with disabilities, including vision impairment.

#### Biography

**Rosie Paueli** is Inclusive Education, Gender, and Climate Change Coordinator for the Tuvalu Australia Partnership for Quality Education (TAPQE) program. Rosie extensive career in Education encompasses being senior primary school teacher for the past twenty years in various schools In Tuvalu. She has made a significant contribution to promoting inclusive education and establishing two Inclusive Education Centre's in mainstream schools in Tuvalu. Additionally, Rosie collaborates with the Fusi Alofa Association, the only DPO in Tuvalu, to promote the CRPD to ensure that all children with disabilities receive appropriate educational support. Rosie aspires 'for all children with disabilities in Tuvalu to receive a quality education and to lead independent lives '

**Annie Dares** is an experienced education practitioner with over a decade of experience managing, implementing, and reporting DFAT funded programs in the Pacific. She has a comprehensive background in education and training – spanning primary and secondary schooling, technical and vocational education and training, and the university sector – community and workforce development, and mentoring and coaching, achieved through diverse roles with government and non-government agencies in Australia and internationally. Recently in her role as the Associate Director of Inclusive Education at Tetra Tech, Annie has played a significant role as the Interim Team leader of the Nauru and Tuvalu education reform programs. Additionally, as the Inclusion advisor in the Tuvalu Australia Partnership for Quality Education (TAPQE)

### 26b Empowerment through connection, inclusion and education

1:30pm – 2:00pm

**Presenters:** Barbara Farouk and Vilisi Salafabisi, Fiji Society for the Blind

#### Abstract

Aim: To Integrate Visually Impaired students into mainstream schools.

Objective: Shaping of Visually Impaired students and young people into inclusive practice defined as attitudes and methods that ensure all learners can access mainstream education. Everyone works to make sure all learners feel welcome and valued and that they get the right support to help them develop their talents and achieve their goals and also educate others on the best ways to assist, interact and communicate with each other. When education is timely and inclusive it can actually benefit all learners, not only disabled learners.

As a service delivery organisation of Visually Impaired persons in Fiji we carry out the following:

1. Early Intervention - Vision Surveillance and Vision Screening
2. Rehabilitation of Visually Impaired persons in Community children & adults and importance of Orientation and Mobility
3. Providing training to Visually Impaired children to enhance their personal skills for living with Blindness
4. Inclusive Education-Integrating Visually Impaired children into mainstreaming- Primary/ Secondary & Tertiary
5. Seeking employment opportunities for Visually Impaired students.
6. Our presentation will highlight mostly on the procedures, training, empowerment, improvement, challenges and support services

#### Biography

**Barbara Farouk** completed her tertiary education at Fiji National Training Council in Lautoka City and attained her Diploma in Accounting and Business Management and Public Administration at FNTC while being employed between 1984-1999. Barbara employed at Tavua Rural Local Authority and advance to Tavua Town Council as Financial Controller and Administrator between 1984-1999. She acted as Town Clerk on several occasions before joining Fiji Society for the Blind in 2000 as Executive Director. She has represented Fiji Society for the Blind and Presented at past SPEVI Biennial Conference.

**Vilisi Salafabisi** has a wide range of experience in the field of Education, Health and Rehabilitation for children and adults with Vision Impairment. Vilisi has delivered presentations on behalf of Fiji Society for the Blind at the International Council of Education of Children with Vision Impairment World Conference and SPEVI Biennial Conference since 2006. Vilisi has received Training from RIDBC and helped coordinate and delivery of National Train and Trainer Program in ECCE (VI & MDV) during 2010-2011. Orientation and Mobility Instructor.

### 26c From Marrakesh to the Marshalls: Making the right to read real in the blue Pacific

2:00pm – 2:30pm

**Presenter**: Mr Ben Clare, SPEVI, Aspen Medical, and Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

#### Abstract

The Marrakesh Treaty 2013 ([https://www.wipo.int/en/web/marrakesh-treaty,](https://www.wipo.int/en/web/marrakesh-treaty%2C)) administered by the World Intellectual Property Organisation seeks to address the Book Famine, a situation that renders an estimated 90 percent of published works inaccessible to people with print disabilities throughout the world. The Treaty, brought about through high level advocacy from the World Blind Union and other relevant organisations facilitates access to published works through addressing copyright laws in individual countries so that works can be produced in alternative formats such as Braille, large print and audio without obtaining permission from copyright holders. The Treaty also works to enable books to be shared across borders of countries who have adopted the instrument, decreasing duplication of works produced, decreasing costs for producers and increasing availability to people who are blind, have low vision or generally have difficulty accessing standard printed materials.

This presentation gives a brief overview of the Treaty, how it operates in member countries, the Accessible Books Consortium for the cross border exchange of accessible works and its positive impact. It will also explore challenges associated with accessible document production and procurement in the Pacific, efforts to increase the number of member countries and affective implementation in current Treaty member locations. The Pacific, facing various and unique barriers to inclusion on this important initiative that addresses the basic human right to read must not be left behind.

#### Biography

**Ben Clare** has worked in the disability sector for more than 20 years. While he is passionate about all aspects of disability advocacy, his work has primarily focused on the education of adults and children with vision impairment and multiple disabilities, boosting the capacity of various disability service providers and OPD’s in several Pacific Island nations and Timor-Leste.

 At this time, Ben works as a Disability Lead Adviser at Aspen Medical, among his work includes raising funds and facilitates self help projects for people with disabilities across the Pacific region. He is often called upon to advise the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on disability related policy and regularly inputs on overseas based DFAT funded initiatives and projects.

Ben held the position of Pacific Regional Chairperson for the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI) from 2016/2021 and is currently the Vice President and Secretary at South Pacific Educators in Vision Impairment (SPEVI.) He also sits on several boards and committees, including SPEVI’s Committee of Management, the Canberra Business Chamber’s Disability Working Group, Australian Volunteers International, the Australian Braille Authority and Blind Citizens Australia. In May 2024, Ben, in partnership with the Disability Rights Fund and the World Blind Union delivered in country Marrakesh Treaty training in Samoa which resulted in the drafting of a formal statement requesting the Samoan government to alter existing copyright law to enable the ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty for the benefit of Samoan citizens with print disabilities, a statement produced by leading disability advocacy groups in the country.

## Session 27: Workshops (Level 6 Seminar Room 3)

### 27a Museums for Touch project

1:00pm – 1:45pm

**Presenters:** Lily Gower and Hannah O'Brien, SA School and Services for Vision Impaired

#### Abstract

Museums provide access to a rich array of artworks, artefacts and specimens through their collections and exhibitions. Museums are inherently inaccessible for individuals who are blind or low vision (BLV) as museums do not allow touch exploration due to preservations and safety concerns (Ginley, 2013; Montsho, 2022). Little to no research has been found directly investigating museum experiences of BLV children, however, initial findings suggest that children’s interest in museums dissipates from a very young age as a direct result of the inaccessibility.

In 2024, SASSVI partnered with the University of Sydney on the "Museum for Touch" project, focusing on co-designing museum experiences with BLV children and vision teachers. The initiative centred on marine biodiversity education, integrating multisensory workshops led by Professor Dagmar Reinhardt. Participants attended 3D modelling workshops and an audio-described tour at the South Australian Museum (SAM), deepening their understanding of marine life through tactile and auditory experiences. They collaborated with researchers to create a tactile toolkit gifted to SAM for its accessible learning resources.

This presentation showcases an inclusive teaching model for BLV students, emphasising WESSST tactile exploration methodology, 3D printing resources, object-based learning, and universal design principles for accessible museum interactions. Pre and post project museum experiences of BLV students will be shared, highlighting the impact of inclusive educational initiatives and advocating for systemic improvements.

Participants in the workshop will experience a series of activities designed to sequentially teach natural history concepts to BLV students. Through interactive demonstrations, attendees will explore effective strategies for fostering engagement and natural history learning among BLV learners that support or enhance student museum experiences.

This project highlights the transformative potential of inclusive education in museums, offering insights into creating enriching experiences that empower BLV children to engage meaningfully with cultural institutions and natural history education.

#### Biography

**Lily Gower** is a nationally accredited Highly Accomplished Teacher with 14 years’ experience teaching at South Australian School & Services for Vision Impaired (SASSVI). She is the Music and Creative Arts Teacher at the SASSVI primary school campus and Specialist Teacher - Vision for the Statewide Support Service, supporting students who are blind or vision impaired in mainstream schools. Lily is innovative in her approach to tactile learning and non-visual drawing.

**Hannah O'Brien** is a Specialist Teacher -Vision for the South Australian School & Services for Vision Impaired (SASSVI) Statewide Support Service, supporting students who are blind or vision impaired in mainstream schools. With 14 years experience in a variety of roles across the school and service. Hannah has special interest in 3D printing and tactile learning, and has previously presented on graphic design and 3D printing at the 2020 SPEVI conference.

### 27b Goalball Queensland Workshop

1:45pm – 2:30pm

**Presenters:** Melissa Cain, Raissa Martin, and Warrick Jackes

#### Abstract

This practical workshop will introduce participants to the Paralympic sport of goalball. Presenters will explain the rules of the game, throwing and catching techniques, and discuss ways to organise informal opportunities for students (both sighted and with vision impairment) to play goalball in schools and in the community. Physical activity plays an important role in the promotion of children’s physical and psychological health, especially for those with disability. People with disability are far less likely to have lifestyles that are physically active than are people without disability. More specifically, children with blindness or low vision may develop delays in fundamental motor skills, including locomotor, object control, and balance skills required for an independent life.

Goalball is a unique and exhilarating team sport designed specifically for individuals with impaired vision. Players rely on their heightened auditory and tactile senses as well as their strategic teamwork to score goals by rolling a ball with bells into the opposing team’s net. The sport’s origins can be traced back to 1946, when the game was devised it as a rehabilitation activity for blinded veterans returning from World War II. Goalball offers important benefits including physical challenge and a means of social interaction. Goalball Queensland representatives will facilitate this session.

#### Biography

**Dr Melissa Cain** teaches and researches in the fields of Inclusive Education and Creative Arts education and supervises Higher Degree Research students in these areas. Melissa’s current research centres on facilitating full access to the Australian Curriculum (academic, social, emotional, and physical) for students with a disability and supporting students with vision impairment in mainstream schools. Melissa was a schoolteacher in Australia and Southeast Asia for many years, has managed three large-scale national Learning and Teaching projects, and has produced an international MOOC through EdX and Microsoft. Melissa has received several higher education teaching awards and is the recipient of the Callaway Doctoral Award.

**Raissa Martin** is an Australian goalball player who represented Australia at the 2016 Rio Paralympics and the 2020 Summer Paralympics. Raissa competed in athletics at local and state level from the age of nine through to the end of high school. She was aware of goalball, but didn’t have access to an accessible team sport in her regional area. Raissa supports students with students with BLV in schools as a advisory vision specialist and is Vice President of Goalball Queensland.

**Warrick Jackes** is an international goalball referee, executive member of Goalball Australia, and President of Goalball Queensland.

## Session 28: Braille and CVI (Level 6 Meeting Room)

### 28a Developing a braille needs assessment for early childhood

1:00pm – 1:30pm

**Presenters**: Tricia d'Apice and Sue Silveira, NextSense

#### Abstract

When children are born with, or are suspected of having vision impairment early on, it is vital that early intervention staff introduce the child’s family to a variety of access choices. One of these choices is braille. Getting “braille on the family’s agenda” needs to happen early, via a gentle introduction to the literacy and life benefits experienced by braille users. Braille can be introduced as one of several strategies available in the child’s literacy toolbox. Early intervention staff play a role in working closely with families to help prepare their child for literacy, so if and when the need for braille arises, the child and family are ready. Part of this preparation is assessment of the child’s braille related developmental skills, combined with consideration of the child’s diagnosis, visual function and functional vision.

Adaptation of the existing Braille Needs Assessment for Students with Vision Impairment (BNA) has allowed the development of a new approach – the Early Childhood Braille Needs Assessment (EI BNA). The EI BNA is a developmentally appropriate, short but targeted tool that can be used by early intervention staff with families, to identify the child’s readiness for beginning braille. The EI BNA creates an easy pictorial that represents a wholistic view of the child which is helpful for both staff and families. It can be used as a repeated measure over time, as the child grows and develops, and their visual access needs change.

This presentation will share the preliminary work which has adapted the BNA for the development of the EI BNA. Plans for validity testing will be discussed, with an invitation extended to the audience to participate in future research related to this project.

#### Biography

**Tricia d’Apice** is the co-creator of the Braille Needs Assessment.

**Sue Silviera’s** initial qualification is in paediatric Orthoptics and has worked extensively in the NSW public hospital system and in vision screening programs. Sue previously held an academic position with the School of Orthoptics, University of Sydney. Sue currently holds a conjoint academic position with Macquarie University and is the Course Director for the Master of Disability Studies. Sue teaches in the areas of vision impairment and disability. Sue is also a research fellow with the NextSense Institute. She is the chief investigator on a project titled the Australian Childhood Vision Impairment Register, a co-investigator on projects related to braille, developing accessible playgrounds for children with vision impairment; and Family Quality of Life.

### 28b Braille for lifelong learners

1:30pm – 2:00pm

**Presenter:** Kerri Weaver, Eyes and Independence

#### Abstract

A blind student finishes their High School years. The family travels, moves house, goes with the flow. The young guy has serious medical setbacks with a stroke following the initial start to life with an early brain tumour. Who will encourage the son to continue accessing braille formats for leisurely reading, shopping lists, news items, a chance to share your thoughts. Audio is of great interest but is it limited? 20 years down the track, what is he doing now?

A 22 year old with RP left school part way through his senior years as he was really struggling reading print, didn’t want to disclose too much about the challenges he was having. A couple of years of riding through the RP diagnosis, not knowing the future. As an NDIS participant, he asked to learn braille.

A young 11 year old, homeschooled has a deteriorating vision impairment. Is currently reading print but has become very keen to learn braille as she has made a friend who is totally blind and wants to write in braille to her and vice versa. Can read printed braille and can develop the visual memory.

What are you doing as a VI teacher to promote lifelong learning and use of braille? Dual media – how are we ensuring they have solid foundations? As a teacher for VI for 30 years, and itinerant for most of that, consistency in teaching braille can be a challenge. Now as an independent provider, children who may be home-schooled are keen to learn, adults losing vision are requesting to learn and adults who didn’t continue braille after school and now late thirties, are embracing it again. This presentation will demonstrate the learnings that are occurring for these clients in braille but unique approaches being introduced to motivate, capture and sustain interest. As a VI specialist who never taught braille everyday, there are challenges but successes with an individual approach.

#### Biography

**Kerri Weaver** has worked in the field of disability for over 35 years. Eyes and Independence supports children, adults, and families; and was the first sole provider to offer specialist teaching for children and adults with a vision impairment, and/or orientation and mobility challenges and training. Support can be provided around the clock, including outside of school hours, in the evening, in the workplace or local community, at child care centres, or at a location that best suits the individual and their family.

### 28c The changing face of Cerebral Visual Impairment

2:00pm – 2:30pm

**Presenter:** Ursula White, Queensland University of Technology

#### Abstract

Cerebral visual impairment is the term used to describe vision impairment due to brain damage or malformation. It can occur in isolation, but is also frequently associated with ocular vision impairment. Traditionally, Cerebral Visual Impairment (CVI) has been associated with students who have significant levels of visual impairment, and often other complex disabilities.

As we get better at recognising the characteristics of CVI, we begin to identify the condition in students with much lower levels of disability, normal cognitive function, sometimes even normal, or near normal levels of lower order visual function (visual acuity, contrast sensitivity, visual fields). Research indicates that the prevalence of CVI is much higher than previously recognised, with 3% of children in mainstream school settings found to demonstrate characteristics of CVI in the UK. It is crucial that these children are identified, given the significant impact this condition can have on learning, friendship, anxiety levels and emotional wellbeing.

This presentation will provide an update regarding the current international consensus on how CVI should be investigated and diagnosed. Recognised risk factors for CVI will be discussed, along with the most recent prevalence rates in specific populations. A proposed pathway to diagnosis will be described for children here in Australia, including those with normal vision levels on standardised measures. Examples of current support frameworks and strategies will be provided.

#### Biography

**Dr Ursula White** is a qualified optometrist who has worked in a range of public, private, and university settings across the UK, New Zealand and Australia. She worked at the Education Low Vision Assessment Centre in Brisbane for almost ten years. During this time, she also completed a PhD, investigating the functional impact of vision impairment. She teaches in the QUT Vision Rehabilitation Clinic and runs Special Eyes Vision Services, an Optometry practice for people with complex needs. She has a keen interest in cerebral visual impairment, and in developing equitable access to eye health for everyone, regardless of abilities/disabilities.

## Session 29: Orientation and Mobility (Ground Floor Auditorium)

### 29a Explorers United - Exploring the power of connection through O&M group programs

3:00pm – 3:30pm

**Presenters:** Marnie Roth, Confident Steps; Darren Moyle, Going Places Orientation & Mobility; and Paula Foote, Orientation and Mobility Specialist

#### Abstract

Explorers United is a collaborative initiative formed by three independent Orientation and Mobility (O&M) specialists dedicated to empowering school-aged children and youth with blindness and low vision. Our innovative programs, conducted during school holidays, are carefully designed to impart essential skills encompassed in the Expanded Core Curriculum and Orientation and Mobility Framework.

Our primary objective is to provide students with real-world experiences that foster the development of independent travel, effective communication, social skills, self-advocacy, and problem-solving abilities. By engaging in these practical activities, students are equipped with the necessary tools to navigate their environments confidently and independently.

We place a strong emphasis on the value of peer learning and the social connections that our group programs facilitate. These interactions are pivotal, as they enable students to share their common lived experiences of blindness and low vision, thereby fostering a supportive community. The exchange of personal insights and strategies among peers not only enhances learning but also strengthens the sense of belonging and mutual understanding within the group.

Our programs are structured to create a dynamic and inclusive learning environment where students can explore, learn, and grow together. Through collaborative exercises, guided travel experiences, and interactive discussions, we aim to cultivate a resilient and empowered generation of individuals who can advocate for themselves and navigate the complexities of the world around them with confidence and competence. The presentation at the SPEVI conference will highlight the methodologies, outcomes, and personal stories from our programs, showcasing the profound impact of our collaborative approach on the lives of young individuals with blindness and low vision. Join us as we share our journey, insights, and the transformative experiences of our students at Explorers United.

#### Biography

**Marnie Roth** stumbled upon Orientation & Mobility (O&M) while studying Orthoptics with a keen interest in low vision services. Marnie has spent many years working as an O&M including working specialising in acquired brain injury, children's 1:1 and group services and early childhood services. As a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS), Marnie has supervised many O&M students and is passionate about seeing future O&M’s being well supported as they launch into being O&M practitioners. Launching 'Confident Steps' in July 2022, Marnie now works as an independent O&M in Melbourne working is schools and community with a predominately young client base. After informally running a very successful group program together, Marnie, Darren and Paula created 'Explorers United' in September 2023 to offer regular group programs for skills development and social connection.

An independent Orientation & Mobility Specialist at Going Places. **Darren Moyle** specialises in working with children and adolescents and integrating technologies to increase independence.

**Paula Foote** is a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist and qualified Guide Dog Mobility Instructor. Paula worked at Guide Dogs Victoria for over 20 years, including 10 years working in the Children’s Mobility Service (CMS). Paula currently works as an independent service provider working predominately with school aged children and youth. Paula has a passion for life-long learning and enjoys the diversity of work that comes with being and Orientation and Mobility Specialist. She also enjoys working with colleagues Marnie Roth and Darren Moyle providing age-appropriate group programs for children, youth and adults under the banner of Explorers United.

### 29b (Online) Building vision teacher capability to help expand the Developmental Orientation and Mobility workforce in Aotearoa, New Zealand

3:30pm – 4:00pm

**Presenters:** Nicola McDowell and Shiree Arrian, Massey University

#### Abstract

The Aotearoa New Zealand Developmental Orientation and Mobility (DOM) service was first established in the 1990’s following the recognition that children had very different O&M needs to adults. Since then, the service has provided support for learners all around Aotearoa. However, due to low numbers of qualified DOM specialists, it has not always been an equitable service, with some learners missing out on regular support due to their region not having consistent DOM specialist involvement.

In 2013, Blind Low Vision Education Network NZ (BLENNZ) introduced the DOM collaborative model, with Resource Teachers Vision (RTV) undergoing DOM short courses so that they could help support the DOM programmes for learners. This has helped to ensure learners receive regular support for basic O&M skills such as guiding, room familiarisation and motor programming.

Building on the collaborative model, in 2024, in collaboration with BLENNZ and the Ministry of Education (MOE), Massey University launched a Post Graduate Certificate in Specialist Teaching (DOM) for teachers who had already completed the RTV training. This is a one year, part time programme and once completed, the RTV-DOM will provide DOM support to learners in their region.

While this helped to expand the delivery of DOM services, it was also important to uphold the O&M profession and the important role of DOM specialists. The RTV-DOM will not be eligible for COMS certification (as they do not need to complete long cane simulation training to gain the PG Cert), and there are certain aspects of the DOM curriculum that they won’t do – including assessments and road crossings. There is however a clear pathway should the RTV-DOM wish to build on their training to become a dual Vision Teacher-O&M Specialist. The first cohort of students completed their certificate at the end of 2024 and five more have enrolled for 2025.

#### Biography

**Dr Nicola McDowell** is the founder and creator of the Austin Assessment, a screening app for cerebral visual impairment related visual issues, and a Senior Lecturer and researcher in the Institute of Education, Massey University, New Zealand. Nicola teaches into the Post Graduate Diploma and Masters in Specialist Teaching programmes, which focus on training educators to work in the learning support space in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Her research interests include understanding and supporting children and young people who have cerebral visual impairment, empowerment of children and their parents/caregivers and equity in education.

**Shiree Arrian** is a certified, registered Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Specialist practitioner and educator with close to 20 years of experience working with individuals who are blind, deafblind or who have low vision across all ages along with their whānau, as well as training specialists and wider support teams. Shiree holds a bachelor’s degree in education, post graduate diploma in Rehabilitation (Vision Impaired), and a master’s degree in specialist teaching. She is Co-President of SPEVI NZ, and a contracted consultant with Massey University’s Specialist Teaching Programme working alongside Dr Nicola McDowell.

## Session 30: Teaching (Level 6 Seminar Room 3)

### 30a Learning something every day: A reflection on a life in teaching

3:00pm – 3:30pm

**Presenter:** Debra Goodsir, NSW Department of Education

#### Abstract

Debra Goodsir has worked for 16 years as a Specialist Vision Teacher in NSW Public Schools. Her work and understanding have been constantly enriched by the students, school staff and families with whom she has worked. There are so many things to be learnt, and to discuss: in this presentation Debra will touch on only a few. If time permits, these will include such things as ; the importance of developing students' self-belief, of helping them to learn how to fail and try again; that all parts of the expanded core curriculum go together to engender student success; the importance of including schools staff and students; the amazing power of inclusion, the importance of developing social skills and friendships to students' learning and happiness.

The presentation will include films made by students with lived experience of low vision, their peers and teachers, as well as reflections and discussion.

#### Biography

**Debra Goodsir** started work as a High School Teacher in Broken Hill, NSW, in 1986. She enjoys teaching and the experiences it brings very much. In 2007 received a NSW Department of Education Scholarship to study Special Education focusing on teaching students with blindness and low vision. In 2008 she started work as an Itinerant Specialist Teacher working collaboratively within pubic school settings. In this role, Debra worked in the Maitland Muswellbrook, Lake Macquarie and Newcastle Vision Teams.

As a teacher, Debra has continued to learn every day from her experiences, and reflections; and more importantly from the students, teachers, parents and communities with whom she has worked.

### 30b The role of the Specialist Teacher Vision Impairment in Australia

3:30pm – 4:00pm

**Presenters:** Melissa Fanshawe and Melissa Cain

#### Abstract

This session looks at the valuable role of the Specialist Teachers Vision Impairment in Australia and what you told us your job entails. Following recent situations in States where the role of the has not been well understood, we collected data in 2023/2024 through a survey of our SPEVI members. Findings will outline average students on case load, qualifications and how specialists spend their time. The discussion will involve your contributions of ways we can ensure the ongoing importance of this professional role throughout Australia.

#### Biography

**Dr Melissa Fanshawe** is an Associate Professor in the School of Education at UniSQ. She has over 25 years of experience in Queensland schools as a teacher, advisory teacher, deputy and principal. She is a qualified and experienced teacher for students with vision impairment, gaining her masters at the Royal Institute for the Deaf and Blind. In the tertiary space, Melissa is passionate about student success and access to education. Her PhD explored participation in learning and preparation for employment for students with blindness and low vision in mainstream secondary schools. She enjoys her volunteer roles as Vision Australia’s education ambassador for the LEGO Foundation’s LEGO braille bricks, co-president of the South Pacific Educators of Vision Impairment and an executive member of the Australian Braille Authority.

**Dr Melissa Cain** teaches and researches in the fields of Inclusive Education and Creative Arts education and supervises Higher Degree Research students in these areas. Melissa’s current research centres on facilitating full access to the Australian Curriculum (academic, social, emotional, and physical) for students with a disability and supporting students with vision impairment in mainstream schools. Melissa was a school teacher in Australia and Southeast Asia for many years, has managed three large-scale national Learning and Teaching projects, and has produced an international MOOC through EdX and Microsoft. Melissa has received several higher education teaching awards and is the recipient of the Callaway Doctoral Award.

## Session 31: Entrepreneurship and Art (Zoom in Online)

### 31a Brewing Independence: Empowering vision impaired students through coffee entrepreneurship

3:00pm – 3:30pm

**Presenter:** Kylie Rattray, SA School & Services for Vision Impaired

#### Abstract

We explore the transformative journey of empowering vision-impaired students through the art of coffee-making, evolving into a successful entrepreneurial venture. The presenter will share a unique and inspiring story which began with teaching essential coffee-making skills in a classroom setting that has flourished into managing a thriving coffee cart business. Attendees will gain insights into the innovative methods and adaptive techniques used to teach practical skills to students with a vision impairment. The presentation will highlight the challenges faced and the creative solutions developed to foster independence and vocational skills. Additionally, the session will provide a detailed account of the transition from educational instruction to operating a profitable coffee cart, including strategies for overcoming barriers and sustaining business growth.

This session aims to inspire educators with practical examples of integrating real-world skills into the curriculum and demonstrates the potential for students to excel in entrepreneurial endeavours, regardless of their vision impairment. Join us to discover how a vision for success can brew into a flourishing reality.

#### Biography

**Kylie Rattray** is a specialist teacher for vision impaired students at the SA School & Services for Vision Impaired (SASSVI). Kylie began her teaching career in 2024, at SASSVI. Prior to this year, Kylie worked as a School Support Officer at Brighton Secondary School supporting students with additional needs for 6 years including students with a vision impairment. Kylie's areas of expertise include Physical Education, general curriculum differentiation, and modifying educational programs to meet the needs of students. She is also knowledgeable about the Modified SACE (South Australian Certificate of Education) and has written programs for those students she was supporting at Brighton Secondary School. Kylie is dedicated to creating positive career pathways for students with vision impairment.

### 31b Establishing disability inclusion centres in tertiary institutions: The challenges and success stories of the University of Goroka in Papua New Guinea – Poster presentation

3:30pm – 4:00pm

**Presenter:** Joe Kuman, University of Goroka

#### Abstract

The University of Goroka (UoG) is one of the major state universities in Papua New Guinea that advocates for inclusion of and accessibility for students with disabilities at tertiary education levels. Of all the state tertiary institutions in the country, UoG is the leading inclusive institution with 100% success rate of graduation of students with disabilities since its establishment in 2015. Students with all kinds of disabilities have been identified, enrolled and graduated despite challenges. Based on its outstanding performances, the Council and the Top Management of the university has launched a disability inclusion centre and named it James Aiwa Special Education Centre (JASEC) after Late Dr. James Aiwa, the pioneer and founder of inclusion program at the university. UoG is the only university in the country that has a disability inclusion centre that provides the platform for students with disabilities to be educated at higher education level.

#### Biography

**Mr. Joe Kuman** is a tutor in Inclusive education and coordinator of James Aiwa Special Education Centre at the University of Goroka (UoG) in Papua New Guinea. He graduated as a primary schools teacher with Diploma in Primary Teaching and later upgraded his qualification to Bachelor Degree in Inclusive Education. He taught students with special needs in Special Education Resource Centres (SERCs) in Papua New Guinea until 2014 when he started tutoring at UoG. He just completed his Honors Degree in Inclusive Education at UoG while working.

## Session 31 Closing Session (Ground Floor Auditorium)

4:00pm – 5:00pm

Celebrating 70 years of SPEVI – Video “Voices of SPEVI” - Sue & Carla Silveira

Looking forward: Blue sky thinking: Melissa Cain

Thank you to our volunteers

Frances Gentle Award for Innovations in Professional Learning (Early Career and Established Career) - Sue Silveira and Pranitha Moodley, NextSense to present

Farewell to SPEVI Bear - Lara Anderson

Conference close by SPEVI Presidents - Phia Damsma, Melissa Fanshawe, Lynda Williams