

# Regional Community Matters

People living in regional and remote areas have had a distinct voice through the 'Connections Project' consultations. The key issues that were raised were:

- Isolation due to distance
- Difficulty of service access
- Issues regarding support with technology and access to audio resources
- Issues regarding support and access to aids and equipment
- Relevance of information

The Association is keen to see some practical changes that we hope will address some of these concerns.

## A Couple of Facts

- 23% of people who responded to the Connections Project surveys expressed interest or concern about matters relating to people living in regional areas.

This represents over one fifth of people who participated in giving their feedback, indicating that this matter is important and has in turn reinforced the Association's focus on communication and service improvements in this area.

- Approximately 30% of people who participated in the surveys indicated interest in having more involvement and communication with the Association via technological methods such as SMS messages and online facilities. (eg, email, Skype, the Association's website, Facebook, etc)

These mediums would provide many possibilities for people living outside of the metro area who are keen to use such technology, to share and learn information and participate in learning opportunities, consultations and social networks.

## Distance

Distance and transport emerged as key issues of concern and this obviously impacts most profoundly on people living in regional and remote areas. Even for people living on the more rural outskirts of Perth such as the Hills, the logistics of travelling to Victoria Park can be problematic.

The Association will continue to strengthen partnerships with service providers in regional areas and explore other ways that we can improve our contact with our regional members, in particular in the Kalgoorlie / Goldfields region and Esperance.

We currently provide regional services via a regular schedule of field trips by specialist staff including Guide Dog instructors, technology and training staff, members of the Children's Services team and field officers who visit country areas as requested and required. Such visits are also in response to requests we receive from people needing support. If you have a need don't hesitate to contact us about it.

## Library

It is apparent that for many people living in regional WA, the library provides a vital service. We understand that the upcoming changes to the library resources (the change from cassette and CD to digital audio) is a big change, especially for those less familiar with this technology. We will be providing support to our regional members as these changes are introduced to ensure that you feel confident in being able to continue accessing the library service.

Did you know that some local regional libraries have been playing a wonderful role in making audio material available to our clients and the broader community? We will continue to collaborate with these libraries and extend our reach to new ones in other regional areas!

### **Aids and Equipment**

Practical access to aids and equipment has been highlighted as another area of frustration for our regional members.

It has been suggested that more aids and equipment be available in regional centres so that clients can be aware of new items and have an opportunity to see them. It is our intention that staff working in regional centres will continue to have access to the aids and equipment available at the Victoria Park premises which are able to be used and demonstrated in regional areas.

Further to this, we are also exploring a new Aids and Equipment Trial Network consisting of Association clients State-wide who will personally trial new items prior to the Association deciding to promote them. This will ensure that new items have been trialled and endorsed by people with blindness or vision impairment.

**“I feel left out when I read about services and activities in Vic Park and Perth. I would like more information about local services.”**

*- Client from regional area*

### **Keeping it relevant**

We have heard you on this matter. Many people have commented on the need for locally relevant information on the website, and in publications and mail outs sent from the Association. We have already begun to have more regional focus in Association information and publications and are open to your ideas.

Did you know that we have five regional staff located throughout Western Australia in the Great Southern Region, the South West, the Mid West and Mandurah?

You can contact these people to talk through any issues or questions you have and arrange to meet with you.

Did you know that we visit the Goldfields and Kimberley regions? If you live in these areas and want to talk with someone about an issue or would like to meet with a visiting staff member, contact the Association on the contact details below.

### **Great Southern Region**

Susanne Reilly (Wed) – 9842 5566

### **South West**

Tom Blair and Mark Graham  
(Mon, Tues, Wed & Fri) – 9791 3200

### **Mid West**

Eliza Thomas (Fri) – 0427 987 662

### **Mandurah**

Rosemary Panting  
(Mon, Wed & Thurs) – 9586 1147

### **Anywhere else in WA**

Country callers can contact the Association in Perth on 1800 847 466 or via email at [info@guidedogswa.com.au](mailto:info@guidedogswa.com.au)

### **What we will do next**

- We will begin by ensuring that each magazine has more content dedicated to regional information and articles.
- We are making improvements to the Association's website to provide easily accessible and regionally relevant information which will be kept updated and available to anyone at any time.
- We will explore possibilities for providing more regular services to people in Kalgoorlie.
- We will extend more of our audio resources to local regional libraries and promote connections with new libraries.