

April 19, 2010

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## Guide Dogs Discovery Centre: education, information, prevention

The first vision and hearing community education centre in Australia will help to stem the rising incidence of preventable vision and hearing loss.

The Guide Dogs Discovery Centre, to be officially opened on **International Guide Dog Day, April 28**, by the Governor of South Australia, Rear Admiral Kevin Scarce at 7.30am, will utilise innovative technology and hands-on learning.

Guide Dogs SA.NT CEO Kate Thiele says the Discovery Centre reflects Guide Dogs' commitment to educate the community about preventative health care.

"Research shows three quarters of vision impairment is preventable or treatable. Noise injury is the leading cause of acquired hearing loss in the community and is completely preventable. We want to reverse this trend for coming generations, as well as create a greater awareness and understanding of the abilities of those living with a vision or hearing impairment."

Built in consultation with educational experts and disability sector staff, visitors will have the opportunity to find out what the world is like for people with sensory loss. Wearing vision loss simulation glasses especially designed for the centre, they will undertake a range of exciting educational challenges. Hearing loss simulators will also allow visitors to experience the world of the hearing impaired.

The Discovery Centre, part of the recent redevelopment of Guide Dogs' Adelaide head office, will showcase world-class dog training methods and a puppy development area.

Ms Thiele says the centre will be available for community groups and businesses from May 1. It will open to schools for excursions on July 20.

Guide Dogs funded the redevelopment of the Adelaide head office, including the Discovery Centre, through two generous bequests.

"We will always be so grateful to these thoughtful and generous people who left this money to us. It has enabled us to plan for the future with confidence and to expand and develop our programs for people with vision and hearing loss," says Ms Thiele.

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