

## Western Australian "Heroes" Deafblind Camp, 2016

Senses Australia was very proud to host the "Heroes" Deafblind Camp, November 18-20th, 2016, at the Woodman Point Recreation Camp, Coogee Western Australia. The WA Deafblind Camp provided an opportunity for people who are deafblind to come together, to catch up with friends old and new, to share lived experiences and engage in recreational activities and outings in an environment that was safe, accessible and supportive. Fifty seven Deafblind people from all over Australia and two people from Scotland and the UK attended the camp this year. To ensure campers had the best experience, volunteers who numbered over one hundred were there to provide 1 to 1 communication and sighted guide support. Volunteers were trained in the areas of: What is Deafblindness, causes, impact, communication, Do's and Don'ts and Sighted Guide training, along with tactile and hand over hand training. Many of the volunteers put in fifteen hours days and were tireless in their commitment and support of our campers. A huge thankyou to all the dedicated volunteers new and old who embraced our deafblind community, we couldn't have done it without you. Feedback from deafblind campers on the volunteers included:

- *"All those new volunteers learn from me with Hand over Hand communication, I teach them not problem, very good and most learn how to guide with me, no problem wonderful so amazing :-)"*
- *"I enjoyed this camp and leaned much from others , all the volunteers were fantastic"*
- *"Very relaxed and the volunteers worked hard to ensure everyone could participate"*
- *"Well organised, the communication support and volunteers enabled me to communicate with others, meet new friends and new challenges"*

On arrival on Friday afternoon campers were given a little time to settle in and orient themselves to the campsite. A meet and greet was held on the beach with a Tug of Wars competition – with lots of muscles, bluff and buster and a few good laughs along the way. This was followed by the evening meal and catching up with friends old and new.



On Saturday campers participated in a variety of recreational activities, including: early morning boot camp and beach walks, flying fox, archery, tandem bike riding, stand up paddle boards, indoor roping challenges in the Cube, massages, coffee at the beautiful Coogee Marina and a great variety of craft activities, including a group totem pole project. Saturday afternoon the activities continued and a historical tour was provided detailing the interesting history of this heritage site.



Saturday evening campers and volunteers alike were entertained with a round of Bingo, followed by comedy with Rob Roy and Rae Gibson. Campers and volunteers were full of enthusiasm and partied well into the night. Everyone embraced the "Heroes" theme with some fantastic costumes and lots of happy snaps were taken in the photo booth to remember the night. Awards were delivered for Best Costumes and Best Volunteers. Many thanks to our stoic judges: Debbie Karasinski, CEO Senses Foundation and Matthew Wittorff, Manager, Deafblind Services.





Campers were asked to feedback on what they liked the most about camp, comments included:

- *"Socialising and meeting new people and old friends"*
- *"The opportunity provided for campers to meet and get to know other campers".*
- *"The paddle boarding, tandem riding and The Cube were excellent activities for active participants. These activities were very well run with "experts" giving good guidance"*
- *"Activities were the best – paddle boards, tandem bikes and bush walks"*
- *"Amazing friendship. I thought it was great having a clown entertaining the DeafBlind Campers on Friday night and letting them touch her. Loved everything even climbing the ladder of the bunk beds was exercising! Photo Booth photos are worth having. Suffering Camp withdrawals!!!!!"*

On Sunday morning campers were on the move early again and given a variety of activities to choose from. Many went to explore the Coogee Marina while others enjoyed hula hooping, yoga, craft; stand up paddle boards and massages.

The West Coast Street Rod Club generously donated their time and provided joy rides to campers in their amazing vehicles throughout the morning.



All too soon it was time to leave the camp for this year. We all enjoyed a goodbye lunch and the speeches began. Many campers got up and expressed their happiness at having been able to participate in this fantastic experience. A few comments from volunteers and campers are listed below:

- *"I enjoy spending time with everyone and seeing deafblind participants mixing socially with each other. I observed there was a lot of mixing, even between people with different communication modes. This was excellent"*
- *"The best camp I've ever attended, I LOVED EVERY MINUTE OF IT"*
- *"Experienced lots of new things and was smiles all weekend"*
- *"Loved socialising and meeting new people and old friends"*
- *"Senses did a fantastic job"*
- *"My first time. Want to go again"*
- *"I just want to say as a carer how important camps such as this one are to me – my brother is not the only one who appreciates your efforts – A big thankyou to all involved from me!!"*
- *"Thoroughly enjoyed myself as a volunteer. Hope to be back in 2018!"*
- *"Very huge THANK YOU for very wonderful camp weekend DB people had very great time"*

This camp was generously supported by Lotterywest, WA Charity Direct, Able Australia and Senses Australia. Again a huge thankyou to everyone who participated and contributed to the success of this camp and we hope to see you all again next time. If you would like to see more of the photographs and comments from camp please visit us at the Deafblind West Australians website <http://www.dbwa.org.au/> and on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=wa%20deafblind%20camp%202016%20photos>

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