

Club support key to Guide Dogs' efforts

RYAN LIPMAN

THE world's biggest guide dog visited Bankstown Sports Club to say thank you.

Towering at 4.3m tall, the replica named Gulliver, is modelled on smaller dog collection boxes seen in shopping centres.

Over the past four years, Bankstown Sports Club has helped raise thousands of dollars through a wishing well to support Guide Dogs NSW/ACT and help them provide mobility services for people with impaired vision.

Guide Dogs fundraising coordinator Lillian Adnan said while vision loss is challenging, Guide Dogs' free services help people realise their disability doesn't have to limit their independence.

"Because we don't receive any government funding, we wouldn't be able to do this without the support of organisations like Bankstown Sports Club," she said.

Bankstown resident Samantha Ogilvie is one of thousands of people across NSW and the ACT with impaired vision, who directly benefit from this support.

Despite losing her sight aged four due to cancer, with her guide dog Geralee, Samantha is studying to be a high school teacher at the University of Western Sydney.

A professional writer and edi-



EYE OF THE PROBLEM

■ **WHAT:** With an ageing population, vision loss is expected to increase by 40 per cent by 2020 meaning 300,000 people in NSW and the ACT will be affected.

tor, Samantha has attended the Sydney Writer's Festival and had her poetry published.

GPS technology and her guide dog have enabled Samantha to independently travel on all public transport in the metropolitan area and country NSW for her role as a Guide Dogs NSW/ACT speaker.

"When you have a guide dog, you always have your best friend walking beside you making the trip that much smoother because I know she's always watching out for me ensuring I never stumble or fall," Samantha said.

Bankstown Sports Club president John Murray said it would be hard to imagine how to cope with losing something as fundamental as eyesight.

"As a club, we feel very privileged to be able to support Guide Dogs NSW/ACT - their work is invaluable to so many people in our community. We're very glad to help," he said.



Lillian Adnan, John Murray and Samantha Ogilvie with guide dogs Vicki and Geralee.
Picture: NICK BLOUKOS



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