

# Services for people with disabilities

## RIDBC libraries – helping to close the gap

**‘Through education we seek to close the gap between the life experiences of children with hearing or vision impairment, and those without.’ - John Berryman, Chief Executive RIDBC**

The Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (RIDBC) dates back to 1860, to a small school for deaf children at 152 Liverpool Street, Sydney. Today, RIDBC’s programs include national early childhood and school age services delivered using groundbreaking communications technology, five preschools (including two in regional locations), three special schools, support for students attending regular preschools and schools, a paediatric audiology centre, additional support services, and the RIDBC Renwick Centre for teacher training, professional development and research.

Supporting such a large number of services are RIDBC’s libraries and resource centres. Individually designed to cater for the needs of their various users, including families, students, teachers and staff RIDBC’s libraries encompass three school libraries, early learning resource centres and the RIDBC Renwick Centre library.

### Renwick Centre Library

Working with Auslan (Australian Sign Language) dictionaries, Braille manuals and Fred the Head are all in a day’s work for staff of RIDBC Renwick Centre Library, Australia’s leading research library in visual and hearing impairment.

What’s Fred the Head? Fred is an aluminium case containing an electronic model of a cochlear implant, a popular resource and just one of the many kits used in the educational programs.

Conducting research and professional training in the education of children with sensory disabilities, the RIDBC

Renwick Centre is part of the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (RIDBC). Created in 1993 by an agreement between RIDBC and the University of Newcastle, the RIDBC Renwick Centre is home to a highly specialised collection of books, journals, videos and kits. The library serves the information needs of Renwick Centre postgraduate students, many of whom study by distance mode, and supports the centre’s academic staff in teaching and research.

Renwick’s affiliation with the University of Newcastle means that the small but specialised collection is supported by the systems, collections and expertise of the university library.

In addition to supporting teaching, learning and research, the Renwick Library also supports the ongoing information needs of professional RIDBC staff, including teachers, psychologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and audiologists.

Parents of children enrolled in RIDBC programs are also able to access specialised information through the Renwick library to help them make informed choices about their children’s learning.

Now 15 years old, the Renwick collection has fast outgrown its current accommodation. We are looking forward to expanding into a new library space to be built as part of a major RIDBC building project in 2008/9. You can be sure there will be a special place on the new shelves to store Fred the Head.

**Julie Thorndyke**  
Manager, Library and Information Services  
<http://www.ridbc.org.au>

### Alice Betteridge School Library

RIDBC’s Alice Betteridge School provides individual educational programs for students in years K-12, aged 4½-18 years, with significant hearing and/or vision impairment, and intellectual impairment. The students follow the NSW Board of Studies syllabus and as a result the library holds an extensive collection of curriculum materials that have been produced in-house to meet the students’ diverse

access needs. These alternative formats include large print, Braille, signing, tactile pictures and Picture Communication Symbols.

RIDBC Alice Betteridge School follows the NSW Board of Studies curriculum and has 67 students, with a staff comprising teachers and teachers’ aides, a team of therapists, a librarian, respite service, and nursing support.

The school’s teaching methods are inclusive and flexible, and address each student’s intellectual, social, physical, emotional, and cultural development in a balanced way, while providing the opportunity for students to exercise personal choice.

The RIDBC Alice Betteridge School library’s functions are similar to those of a mainstream school library. Staffed by a part-time librarian, it provides both educational and recreational resources to support students and staff.

**Lesley Joy**  
Librarian  
Alice Betteridge School  
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## Book review

***The survival guide to Auslan: a pocket beginner's dictionary of Australian Sign Language* / Trevor Johnston, Adam Schembri (ed); Shaun Fahey, illustrator.**

North Rocks, N.S.W.: North Rocks Press, RIDBC, 2003. ISBN 094905013x \$25.00

Five hundred of the most used Auslan (Australian Sign Language) signs are listed alphabetically, described and illustrated in this 202 page, pocket sized dictionary. Auslan is not English in signed form, but a language of its own, used by the Australian Deaf community, differing from sign language used in other countries. This introductory guide is a compact reference for people learning sign language vocabulary. It includes a finger-spelling alphabet chart at the back, which is useful for signing name, places and unfamiliar words.

This little reference book is a handy learner’s tool, supplementing the *Signs of Australia*: a dictionary of Auslan edited by Trevor Johnston in CD-ROM or book and the Auslan Signbank online <http://www.auslan.org.au/>