



11 Kitchener Ave Burswood 6100, Phone (08) 9473 5400 Web [www.senses.asn.au](http://www.senses.asn.au)

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## **Deafblind Event Needs Helpers**

**Brentwood** student Jessica Karasinski (20) is just one recruit from a small army of volunteers needed to help with a very unique conference next month, which is being organised by **The Senses Foundation (Inc)**, the primary advocate for West Australians who are both deafblind (or blind with an additional disability).

Between September 25 and 30 the Foundation will host the **14<sup>th</sup> Deafblind International World Conference, at the Burswood Convention Centre**. The conference is the most important event on the calendar for the international deafblind community and is expected to attract more than 500 delegates from afar afield as Brazil and Norway. Among them will be the world's leading authorities on deafblindness.

The event's theme is 'Breaking the Isolation and Building Worldwide Connections' and included on an impressive guest list is Federal Human Rights Commissioner, Graeme Innes (AM) who is the Commissioner responsible for Disability Discrimination.

But Sense Foundation Chief Executive Officer, Debbie Karasinski, says as the conference draws nearer, many more volunteers, like Jessica, are needed to help with a variety of jobs.

Jessica is a Theatre Arts and Law student at **Murdoch University**. She is pictured here with **Canning Vale** woman Sharyn Mitchell (42), a Senses Foundation client who was a teenager when she was diagnosed with Ushers Syndrome, a genetic condition which results in blindness and deafness. Her vision is estimated at just 5% and although she had a Cochlea implant in one ear, relies heavily on lip reading.

Sharyn assists with the Ushers Syndrome Support Group and has volunteered to help at a pre-conference workshop on Ushers Syndrome.

Volunteers at the International Conference could be asked to help with a range of jobs that could include caring for guide dogs, interpreting sign language and acting as guides for the vision impaired.

Senses Foundation, Chief Executive Officer, Debbie Karasinski, says the conference poses some very unique challenges for organisers and help from volunteers is essential to making it a success.

“We estimate that we need 1,800 hours of volunteer time and while we’ve already had a lot of people commit to helping out, we need more,” Ms Karasinski says.

“People can feel assured that for many of the roles, they don’t need any special skills.

“They could just hand out name tags, show a delegate with vision impairment to their seat and of course someone is needed to walk and water the Guide Dogs.

“This is a great community service project for a club or organisation that wants to help out a not-for-profit organisation in a very practical way.”

Volunteer training days are scheduled for September 14 and 15.

Anyone who can help is asked to contact **Senses Foundation (Inc)**, Staff Training and Development Officer, David Canham on 9473 5400.



**Photograph shows Senses Foundation client Sharyn Mitchell (left) and conference volunteer Jessica Karasinski (right.)**

**Media Contact: For further comment contact Debbie Karasinski on 9473 5400 or 0412 722 788.**

**Press release issued by Kerry Faulkner, Senses Foundation Media Liaison Officer on 0432 098 878.**