



**Graham Thomas**  
**1948 - 2007**

Graham was born on 18 June 1948 in Carlton, the fourth of ten children born to Henry Raymond and Lilly Rosina Thomas. Graham attended Moorabbin West Primary School and then went to Sandringham Technical School, leaving when he was 14. At 16 he went to work at Bode Packaging, working his way from the shop floor to more senior positions. Graham worked in the printing industry at Bode Packaging for 15 years.

At 31, Graham needed a change and went to work for Loy's Drinks, starting as a driver and eventually becoming a personnel manager. The last company he worked for was Rothman's. Marrying at 21, Graham had four children, and as a parent became actively involved in the Noble Park Junior Football Club for nine years, working on the committee and as a team manager. Unfortunately, at 42, Graham was diagnosed with an extremely rare eye disorder, which developed rapidly, leaving him clinically blind. Graham was devastated.

During the first 18 months after diagnosis, his friends abandoned him and his marriage of 24 years ended. He decided that he couldn't sit around feeling sorry for himself, "you've got to show your kids there is more in life". While attending a Quality Living course in Springvale in 1992, courses at Kooyong, and a peer training course in 1993 (conducted by Vision Australia), Graham felt there was a need in the City of Greater Dandenong for a group to assist the visually impaired.

In 1994, Graham gathered 11 people to meet for lunch at the Noble Park RSL. In 2000, the membership has grown to over 100 people, meeting every alternate Friday. Graham organises guest speakers and regular outings. His inspiration has helped others to find friendship and a sense of worth in their lives. In addition, Graham assisted in establishing groups in Dandenong, Cranbourne and Glen Waverley. Graham is also a member of the Disability Advisory Committee for the City of Greater Dandenong. At 52, Graham is an example of courage and hope not only to his children, but to his community.