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## **Text to Speech Helps Guide Dog Trainer Cover the Outback**

*TextAloud Turns Trainer's Reading Backlogs into Enjoyable Journeys*

CLEMMONS, NC and CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA -- **Beth Helmers** loves her unique and rewarding job traveling all over Australia as a Guide Dog Orientation and Mobility Instructor, but dealing with her job's commutes and long hours on the road can be challenging. Luckily, she discovered *TextAloud*, the Text to Speech software from NextUp Technologies (<http://www.NextUp.com>) that allows people all over the world to output their reading material into natural, enjoyable computer speech using nothing more than an ordinary PC.

Beth manages one of the Guide Dogs NSW/ACT offices in Eastern Australia, and helps people with vision losses to learn to travel independently and safely in their communities, workplaces, and schools. "Much of my work is geared toward helping people use their other senses to feel confident accomplishing a variety of tasks that can be intimidating at first," she explains, "like crossing roads, navigating in busy malls and the like. It's great seeing people gain confidence in themselves."

Beth's work takes her all over the Eastern part of Australia, and has sometimes encompassed commutes of hundreds or even thousands of miles. When she first discovered *TextAloud*, Beth was spending ten to twelve days at a time on the road navigating an Australian state roughly the size of California. While the satisfaction and joy of her job made the rough commutes worth the effort, she nevertheless found herself trying to fill long stretches of drive time while also mourning the loss of that time from both work and leisure perspectives.

Beth turned to *TextAloud*, intrigued by the idea of exporting her reading to text that she could listen to anywhere. She found the program easy to install and quickly began to use the program to output books, articles, and more into surprisingly natural-sounding speech. Priced starting at \$29.95, *TextAloud* is an affordable and simple PC program that converts text into spoken audio which can then be listened to via a PC, laptop, or a huge assortment of other mobile devices. "I

wouldn't have gotten much chance to read if it weren't for *TextAloud*," she comments. "By exporting interesting articles and books to *TextAloud*, I've been able to keep my mind active and alert even while driving over a large territory."

Beth soon discovered that the program's Text to Speech capabilities weren't just for books, but were also just as valuable for stories, e-mails, assignments, even study materials. "It was great to make practical use of the time behind the wheel," she adds. "In fact, I studied for my final written exams to become a Guide Dog Instructor using *TextAloud*."

*TextAloud* soon became valuable for Beth when creating lecture notes or reminders for her visually impaired clients in the training program, and quickly became a regular source of support on those tasks as well. To accomplish this, Beth would simply use *TextAloud* to export the required reading to MP3 files, providing to her clients for easy listening on the computer, in the car, or on their iPods or portable listening devices.

This soon led to Beth's recommendation of the program to her many visually impaired clients as an alternative to expensive screen readers. "Many of my visually impaired clients can't afford the screen reading programs, which are often prohibitively expensive," she explains. "*TextAloud*'s low cost is one of its huge bonuses, and why I've recommended it to so many of my clients." For her clients simply seeking an easy yet versatile Text to Speech alternative for their reading, *TextAloud* was perfect.

Beth does most of the listening to her Text to Speech on a Sandisk MP3 player and her Sony Laptop. Her favorite voices available for *TextAloud* include Premium Voices Crystal and Mike from AT&T Natural Voices™. "I like the increasingly natural intonations and pronunciations that are available, and I've just bought a Norwegian voice so that I can keep up with some of my Norwegian books and articles left over from my years living there, as well," she adds.

Ultimately, *TextAloud* has proven indispensable to Beth on her long drives, a partner in keeping her awake and alert. “Most importantly, *TextAloud* allows me the opportunity to listen to things I want to hear that aren’t otherwise available in an audio format,” she adds, “such as e-mails, websites, and stories friends and I have written. Thanks to *TextAloud*, I’ve spent many a happy hour listening to and enjoying things downloaded off the internet.”

### **About *TextAloud***

Highly useful for students, scientists, writers, business people, students and people from all walks of life -- *TextAloud* has been featured in *The New York Times*, *PC Magazine*, *Writer’s Digest*, on CNN, and more. Hailed by critics and users alike, *TextAloud* is priced from \$29.95, and is compatible with systems using Windows® 98, NT, 2000, XP and Vista. The program is available for fast, safe and secure purchase via <http://www.NextUp.com>.

NextUp.com also offers *TextAloud* with optional premium voices from **AT&T Natural Voices™**, **Nuance®**, **Acapela®** and **Cepstral®** for the most natural-sounding computer speech anywhere. Available languages include U.S. English, U.K. English, Indian Accent English, Scottish Accent English, Arabic, Cantonese Chinese, Mandarin Chinese, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Belgian Dutch, Faroese, Finnish, French, Canadian French, German, Icelandic, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Norwegian, Polish, Brazilian Portuguese, European Portuguese, Russian, Castilian (European) Spanish, Latin American Spanish, Mexican Spanish, Swedish, and Turkish.

### **About NextUp.com**

**NextUp.com**, a division of NextUp Technologies, LLC, provides award-winning Text to Speech software for consumers, professionals, businesses, educators, and those with visual or vocal impairment, or learning disabilities.

In addition to *TextAloud*, NextUp.com markets other innovative Windows software designed to save time and deliver vital information. NextUp *Talker* is an easy and affordable program that allows people who have lost their voices to use the latest in high-quality computer voices to communicate with others.

Evaluation copies of *TextAloud* are available upon request. For more information on NextUp.com or *TextAloud*, or for other case studies involving users ranging from students, to entrepreneurs, firefighters, doctors, lawyers, truck drivers, musicians, and more, please contact publicist Angela Mitchell at **(904) 982-8043** or via [Admitchell@Nextup.com](mailto:Admitchell@Nextup.com).

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