# Nominee Supporting statement

# Emma Bennison

I am writing to seek your support for election as President of Blind Citizens Australia.

BCA is experiencing many challenges which require focus and commitment from all of us. I believe that I have the commitment, personal experience and professional skills to lead our organisation back to its rightful position as the national representative voice of blind and vision impaired Australians.

So given the current state of the organisation, why would I nominate for the role at this time? It has not been an easy decision, as I have two young children, a demanding role as co-CEO of Arts Access Australia and am a practicing artist. It is however, due in part to the breadth of my personal experience, that the role excites me.

I am old enough to remember BCA at a time when it was characterised by a feisty and fearless passion to truly act as the united voice of people who are blind. Conversely, I am young enough to remember the transformative impact on me of observing and learning from experienced blind leaders and peers. For these reasons, I remain passionately committed to BCA’s mission, and absolutely convinced that there is still a crucial role for BCA beyond 2015. This conviction has been strengthened as a result of my involvement in the recent BCA Leaders’ Summit, where I was excited to see renewed passion and enthusiasm for our organisation.

I have a strong track record of serving people with disability. Most significantly, I became the Chair of Arts Access Australia at a time when the organisation was facing a serious funding crisis. I worked collaboratively with the board, with members and with funding bodies to restore confidence in the organisation as the national voice for arts and disability.

I have also worked at local and national levels with BCA since 1999, having served as Vice-President of the Brisbane branch for two years and as a Director on the BCA board since 2012. Having attended many gatherings of blind people over the past 25 years, (including the National Braille Music Camp), I maintain strong and meaningful connections with blind people from a wide range of backgrounds across the country. My husband is blind and we have lived in Queensland, regional NSW and Tasmania. So I understand first-hand the disparities between major metropolitan areas, smaller cities and regional Australia in relation to provision of blindness services and access to peer support.

If elected as President, I commit to:

* Genuinely engaging in an ongoing conversation with BCA members to ensure all views are represented and considered.
* Developing and progressing strategies to support well-considered, timely and proactive action from BCA in relation to issues impacting our members and other blind and vision impaired Australians from all walks of life.
* Leading an energised, transparent and harmonious board with a focus on harnessing the skills of all directors to benefit BCA members.
* Creating opportunities for young and emerging leaders to learn and develop their skills through training and mentoring.

In recent years, many members have shared their frustrations with me in relation to BCA and the fact that it is in danger of becoming irrelevant. While I fully understand and share these concerns, I know that with the strong and experienced leadership I could provide, and with your support, we can ensure that BCA strengthens its position as the national voice of blind and vision-impaired Australians.

I look forward to your support and would be pleased to provide a more detailed summary of my work and volunteering history.

Please feel free to contact me as detailed below:

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