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Blind Citizens Australia

# Summary of Strategic Plan: 2017 - 2020

## Executive Summary

Blind Citizens Australia (BCA) is the national organisation of people who are blind or vision impaired and is recognised as the major peak representative body for this constituency. Since 1975, BCA has provided information, peer support, individual and systemic advocacy, and consultancy services to its members and the wider community. BCA Branches act as local representative groups and provide opportunities for social interaction for members.

BCA has experienced a recent period of challenges due to a number of external factors driving change. To meet these challenges, BCA has undertaken a number of practical steps to gather the views of members and other stakeholders as part of reorienting its goals and priorities, including a Leader’s Summit in June 2015 and a series of member surveys and forums in the second half of 2015.

This Strategic Plan provides a clear blueprint for the future of BCA. At its core, this Plan shows the way toward building on the strengths of the organization, and learning from past experiences as a nexus for innovation, resilience and sustainability. It outlines a focused direction for maximizing effectiveness in a resource limited environment while preparing for the changes in our operating environment.

## Vision of Blind Citizens Australia

A community which embraces people who are blind or vision impaired.

## Mission of Blind Citizens Australia

Blind Citizens Australia is the united voice of Australians who are blind or vision impaired. Our mission is to achieve equity and equality by our empowerment, by promoting positive community attitudes and by striving for high quality and accessible services which meet our needs.

## The Four Pillars That Underpin BCA's Future Success

### Sustainability

* Adequate funding from a diverse range of funding sources;
* An appropriately skilled and committed staff team;
* An expanding and more diversified membership;
* Skilled and committed leadership,
* A leadership training and succession planning philosophy that is integrated to all aspects of the organization.

### Credibility

* A commitment to evidence based public policy development and well-articulated advocacy;
* Well-developed internal communications and networking mechanisms that remain in tune with the needs and aspirations of the membership;
* Well-developed sector intelligence mechanisms;
* The strategic appointment of external representatives with appropriate feedback mechanisms.

### Independence

* Development and maintenance of collaborations and strategic partnerships across the blindness and broader disability sectors; with no organisation in a position to exercise undue influence over the BCA Board or staff.

### Legitimacy

* BCA must re-establish its place as the authoritative national voice of blind and vision Impaired Australians.

## The Rights of People Who are Blind or Vision Impaired

All of Blind Citizens Australia’s available resources and the way it goes about its work are based on the following fundamental beliefs and incorporate the principles of the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

We believe:

* All people have equal rights.
* All people have strengths and assets.
* It is possible to make a positive difference in the lives of children and adults who are blind or vision impaired.
* People thrive when they make their own choices and people who are blind or vision impaired are capable of, and have the right to, make their own decisions.
* All people should have equality of opportunity in access to transportation, education, jobs, medical care, recreation and housing.
* Engaging and participating in community life has a positive impact on people who are blind or vision impaired and their communities.
* People’s health and safety are essential to effectively participate in their communities.
* Well-trained and motivated staff make a difference in the lives of people who are blind or vision impaired.
* Supporting members and their families in their own advocacy efforts will yield long term improvements in their quality of life.
* The family has an important role in the development of and support of people who are blind or vision impaired throughout their lives.

## External Relationships

### Principles

BCA is founded on the philosophy that people with lived experience of vision loss should have primacy in advocating for their needs in all areas of life. Our Public Policies and advocacy representations are underpinned by three values:

1. People who are blind or vision impaired are in the best position to advocate for their own needs and those of the community they directly represent.
2. All representations should be based on constructive and respectful dialogue.
3. BCA does not limit its advocacy to representation of its members. It speaks on behalf of those who choose to avail themselves of its services.

### Broad External Relationships

BCA's work in developing and articulating public policies that address the needs and aspirations of blind and vision impaired Australians; and its role as the independent and authoritative advocate on behalf of individuals who live with vision loss is centered on the relationships it has with a wide range of external collaborators. These include:

* Government agencies and business enterprises;
* Commercial providers of goods and services;
* Community advisory and advocacy organizations;
* Disability representative organizations and their peak structures;
* Blindness Service Agencies and their umbrella bodies.

While the nature and extent of these relationships will vary, all such collaborations should be founded on mutual respect and recognition of the value that BCA brings to the discourse through its expertise as the representative voice of its constituency.

BCA enters all such relationships with the expectations that it will be recognized as an equal partner in negotiations that impact on the lives of those who live with substantial vision loss.

### Evidence based Policy Development and Advocacy

BCA recognizes that its advocacy and broader representation on behalf of people who are blind or vision impaired must be evidence based. As such BCA commits to:

* Ongoing engagement with its membership, as a total group; as sub groups with particular needs and aspirations; and as individuals who may be separately impacted by perceived or actual discrimination;
* Broader research to determine the nature and extent of the likely impact of any current or future policies or practices;
* Full consideration of solutions or alternatives proposed by negotiating parties;
* Negotiation on the basis of serving the best interests of all parties wherever possible.

### Goals

Goal 1: Increase the Quality of Member Engagement and Communications

Goal 2: Develop and Strengthen Connections with Key Community Stakeholders

Goal 3: BCA increases its organizational strength and actively plans for the future

Goal Four: BCA works towards diverse and sustainable funding to deliver on its future vision

Goal 5: BCA engages in high quality and well targeted advocacy

These goals are supported by a series of more specific strategies which outline a details plan for the future.