Blind Citizens Australia

# Victorian Toolkit

**Revised September 2018**

## Welcome to the Victorian Blind Citizens Toolkit.

### Introduction

Navigating the disability service system can be a complex and frustrating process. Through our work, it has become clear that service providers and professionals who diagnose vision loss do not always provide their clients with appropriate information and referrals and as a result, many people simply don’t know about the range of options that exist to enable them to have greater choice and control over their lives. This is where our Blind Citizens toolkits come in!

If you feel like the information you have received from a Local Area Coordinator does not adequately meet your needs as a person who is blind or vision impaired, the friendly staff at Blind Citizens Australia are always here to assist you. And if you are new to blindness or vision loss, Blind Citizens Australia can link you in with peer support opportunities that will enable you to talk to other people who are blind or vision impaired about the services and supports they are receiving.

We have produced a separate toolkit for each Australian state and territory to provide comprehensive and easy to understand information about the range of benefits, concessions and services that are available to people who are blind or vision impaired. These toolkits will be especially useful for individuals who are new to vision loss or have just moved interstate. Because the disability service system is constantly evolving though, even those individuals who have been blind or vision impaired for a longer period of time will find the information contained in these toolkits relevant and useful.

You can obtain a copy of any of our Blind Citizens Toolkits in your preferred format by contacting our office on the details below:

Blind Citizens Australia

Phone: 03 9654 1400

Toll free: 1800 033 660

Email: bca@bca.org.au
Web: [www.bca.org.au](http://www.bca.org.au/)

### Disclaimer:

The content in this toolkit has been developed to reflect the benefits, entitlements and services available to people who are blind and vision impaired. All content is of a general nature and for personal use only. Although every effort has been made to verify the accuracy and currency of the information contained within this document at the time of publication, details may be subject to change without notice.

If you would like to provide comment on the content of this toolkit, please contact our Office.

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## 1. Disability Care and Support Schemes

**Important note:**

The disability support landscape has changed significantly over the past few years and will continue to evolve in years to come. We recommend you read through this section to learn more about the care and support schemes that are currently available. However, we know the range of options can be quite confusing. If you would like assistance to find out which scheme you may be eligible for, you might benefit from speaking to a Local Area Coordinator (LAC). In Victoria, there are currently three organisations that have been funded to provide Local Area Coordination services – these are The Brotherhood of St Laurence, Latrobe Community Health Service and Intereach. Contact details for all three organisations have been provided below –

#### Brotherhood of St Laurence

Description: Our work in the community is varied: ranging from early learning, employment preparation and digital literacy programs to aged care. Our Saver Plus program has supported thousands of low income earners to develop a lasting savings habit and is Australia's longest running matched savings and financial education program.

Phone: (03) 9483 1183

Website: www.bsl.org.au

#### Intereach

Description: Intereach is a charity for rural and remote community members of NSW. They provide a wide range of information, services and support that will help you to live well, lead the life you want and participate in your local community. We support children, young people, families, older people, carers and people with disabilities in a range of different ways. Sometimes it is hard to know what is available where you live. We work alongside you and your family to find the right support that suits your personal situation

Phone: 1300 488 226

Website: [www.intereach.com.au](http://www.intereach.com.au)

#### Latrobe Community Health

Description: Latrobe Community Health Service is one of the largest providers of aged, disability and carer services in Gippsland.

Phone: 1800 242 696

Website: [www.lchs.com.au](http://www.lchs.com.au)

**Victorian Health and Human Services**

**Description:** We assist Victorians in our community who are most in need through housing, disability and children, youth and family services.

Phone: 1800 783 783

Website: [www.dhs.vic.gov.au](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au)

### National Disability Insurance Scheme

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) facilitates lifetime funding for reasonable and necessary supports to persons under 65 years of age. These supports are aligned to the goals and choices the individual makes regarding their independence and social and economic participation.

Phone: 1800 800 110

Website: [www.ndis.gov.au](http://www.ndis.gov.au)

Resources and further information about the NDIS is available on BCA’s website, or on request by contacting the office.

### National Injury Insurance Scheme (NIIS)

Available in Queensland and rolling out in other states the NIIS is a no-fault scheme that provides life time care for individuals who have suffered significant injury including permanent legal blindness. The injury needs to be caused by a motor vehicle, workplace, medical or general accident.

Phone: Not Available; QLD 1300 607 566

Website: [www.treasury.gov.au](http://www.treasury.gov.au) ; [www.niis.qld.gov.au](http://www.niis.qld.gov.au)

### Continuity of Support Programme (CoS)

The Continuity of Support Programme is intended to enable people over 65 to continue receiving the same level and type of support they were receiving prior to the NDIS or turning 65. Under the CoS you will not loose your current services or pay any more. However, if your needs have changed you may need to consider other aged care such as the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP).

Phone: 1800 020 103

Website: [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)

* + [Cached](http://search.health.gov.au/s/cache?collection=health-web&doc=funnelback-web-crawl.warc&off=5204361&len=7721&url=https%3A%2F%2Fagedcare.health.gov.au%2Fprograms-services%2Fcommonwealth-continuity-of-support-programme&profile=health&hl=(%3Fi)%5Cbcontinuities%5Cb%7C%5Cbcontinuity%5Cb%7C%5Cbsupports%5Cb%7C%5Cbsupport%5Cb)
	+ [Explore](http://search.health.gov.au/s/search.html?collection=health&profile=health&query=explore:https%3A%2F%2Fagedcare.health.gov.au%2Fprograms-services%2Fcommonwealth-continuity-of-support-programme)

### My Aged Care

People who acquire vision loss after the age of 65 will need to access support through My Aged Care. There are two types of support packages available through My Aged Care. Home care packages, designed to enable people to continue living in their homes and; Residential care packages for individuals who need to transition to an aged care facility. An assessment is required to determine eligibility.

Phone: 1800 200 422

Web: [www.myagedcare.gov.au](http://www.myagedcare.gov.au)

Resources and further information about My Aged Care is available on BCA’s website, or on request by contacting the office.

## 2. Organisations of and/or for People who are Blind or Vision Impaired

### Able Australia

Able Australia is a non-profit organisation that provides services to people living with multiple disabilities including deaf blindness.

Phone: 1300 225 369
Website: [www.ableaustralia.org.au](http://www.ableaustralia.org.au)

### Albinism Fellowship of Australia

Description: The AFA’s key purpose is to provide support, education and fellowship to those with albinism, parents of children with albinism as well as their families and friends.

Phone: 1300 22 16 19

Website: [www.albinismaustralia.org](http://www.albinismaustralia.org)

### Blind Citizens Australia (BCA)

Blind Citizens Australia is the peak national representative organisation of Australians who are blind or vision impaired. The organisation provides an information and advocacy service that can be accessed free of charge. BCA members also receive regular publications to keep them informed about different issues that may affect them and have access to a range of peer support opportunities.

Phone: 1800 033 660

Website: [www.bca.org.au](http://www.bca.org.au)

### Blind Sports Victoria

Blind Sports Victoria (BSV) is a State Sporting Association dedicated to blind and vision people in sport and active recreation. Blind Sports Victoria works closely with Victorian State and Local Governments, State Sporting Associations, Disability Organisations and Community Organisations to improve and increase the number of opportunities available for blind and vision impaired people to participate in sport and active recreation. For more information contact Blind Sports Victoria.

Phone: (03) 9822 8876
Website: [www.blindsports.org.au](http://www.blindsports.org.au)

### Guide Dogs Victoria

Learn to move confidently through the world with Orientation & Mobility travel training, maximise your remaining vision, master daily living skills with Occupational Therapists, or train and partner with a Guide Dog.

Phone: 1800 804 805
Website: [www.guidedogsvictoria.com.au](http://www.guidedogsvictoria.com.au)

### Macular Disease Foundation

Macular Disease Foundation Australia is committed to providing people with a macular disease, their family and carers, with access to relevant support and support services. The Foundation also supports health care professionals with information and resources to help them support their patients. Programs are directed towards education, awareness, early detection and treatments, support services and representation.

Phone: 1800 111 709

Website: [www.mdfoundation.com.au](http://www.mdfoundation.com.au)

### Retina Australia

Retina Australia is committed to raising funds for research into

The detection, prevention, treatment and cure of inherited retinal dystrophies. Through its state member organisations, crucial support and information is provided to the newly-diagnosed and to those whose vision is deteriorating.

Phone: 1800 999 870

Website: [www.retinaaustralia.com.au](http://www.retinaaustralia.com.au)

### Vision Australia

Vision Australia’s services are tailored to a person’s level of vision and touch every aspect of a person’s life. These services include adaptive technology training, Braille training, training in the use of a Seeing Eye Dog or cane, independent living services such as occupational therapy, employment services, library services, advocacy and peer support.

Phone: 1300 847 466

Website: www.visionaustralia.org

## 3. Income Support and Financial Assistance

**Important note:**

Most of the payments listed in this section are administered by Centrelink. There are different phone numbers that will apply, depending on the type of payment you wish to enquire about, and the relevant phone number has been provided under the entry for each payment. Alternatively, you can obtain further information about payments administered by Centrelink by visiting [www.humanservices.gov.au](http://www.humanservices.gov.au)

### Age Pension

The age pension is the main income support payment for people who have reached age pension age. There is eligibility criterion. However, the income test is not used if you are permanently blind and get [Age Pension](https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/age-pension) unless you get [Rent Assistance](https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/rent-assistance).

Phone: 132 300

Website: [www.humanservices.gov.au/agepension](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/agepension)

### Austudy

Financial help for full time students and Australian Apprentices, 25 years or older. Must be studying an approved course and be under income and asset test limits.

Note: The 2017–18 Budget includes a measure Better Alignment of Student Payments which may change this information from 1 January 2018.

Phone: 132 490.

Website: [www.humanservices.gov.au/austudy](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/austudy)

### Carer Allowance

A fortnightly income supplement if you give daily care and attention to someone who has a disability, serious illness, or an adult who is frail and old.

That is not subject to an income and assets test. It can be paid in addition to wages or other support payments such as the Carer Payment or Parenting Payment.

Phone: 132 717.

[www.humanservices.gov.au/carerallowance](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/carerallowance)

### Carer Payment

An income support payment if you give constant care to someone who has a severe disability, illness, or an adult who is frail and old. There are eligibility rules for the carer and person receiving care.

Phone: 132 717

Website: [www.humanservices.gov.au/carerpayment](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/carerpayment)

**Concessions and Benefits (Victorian Government)**

A range of concessions are available to all Victorians who are on low incomes or experiencing hardship and need help meeting the cost of living. Concessions range from communication, eductation, energy, finance, hardship, health, recreation, transport, water, rates and property. To determine your eligibility use the Concessions Eligibility Calculator.Z

Phone: Victorian concessions Information Line: 1800 658 521

Website: <https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/about-concessions>

### Crisis Payment

The Crisis payment is a one-off payment that is available to assist people who are suffering severe financial hardship and experiencing difficult or extreme circumstances such as domestic violence, arrival in Australia for the first time on humanitarian visa or recently released from prison or psychiatric confinement.

Phone: 132 850.

Website: [www.humanservices.gov.au/crisispayment](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/crisispayment)

### Disability Support Pension

The Disability Support Pension provides financial support if you have a permanent physical, intellectual or psychiatric condition that stops you from working. It is subject to income and asset tests. You may not be subject to the income or assets test if you’re permanently blind, unless you’re claiming Rent Assistance, or your partner claims an income support payment.

Call: Centrelink on 132 717

[www.humanservices.gov.au](http://www.humanservices.gov.au)

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### Education Entry Payment

A once a year payment made when you start an approved education course and you get certain income support. It is a lump sum taxable payment of $208.00 per year.

Call: Centrelink on 132 490

[www.humanservices.gov.au](http://www.humanservices.gov.au)

### Essential Medical Equipment Payment

The Essential Medical Equipment Payment helps with the additional costs of running essential medical equipment, medically required heating or cooling, or both.

Contact Centrelink on 132 717.

[www.humanservices.gov.au](http://www.humanservices.gov.au)

### Financial Information Service

The Financial Information Service helps you make informed decisions about your finances.

Contact Human Services: 132 300

[www.humanservices.gov.au/fis](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/fis)

### Mobility Allowance

A regular payment to help with essential travel costs if you have a medical condition that means you can't use public transport. You can’t get the payment if you have a plan with the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

Contact Centrelink on 132 717.

[www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/mobility-allowance](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/mobility-allowance)

### Newstart Allowance

The main income support payment while you’re unemployed and looking for work.

Contact Centrelink on 132 850.

[www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/newstart-allowance](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/newstart-allowance)

### No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS)

The No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS) provides eligible individuals and families on low incomes with access to safe, fair and affordable credit. Loans are available for up to $1,500 for essential goods and services such as fridges, washing machines and medical procedures. Repayments are set up at an affordable amount over 12 to 18 months.

**Phone:** 1800 509 994

**Website:** [www.nils.com.au](http://www.nils.com.au)

**Payment Finder**

The Human Services payment finder is an online service that helps you find, estimate and compare payments and services you may be eligible for.

Website: [www.humanservices.gov.au/paymentfinder](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/paymentfinder)

### Pensioner Education Supplement (PES)

A regular extra payment to help with study costs if you get certain income support from Centrelink and study an approved secondary or tertiary course.

Contact Centrelink on 132 490.

[www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/enablers/claiming-pensioner-education-supplement](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/enablers/claiming-pensioner-education-supplement)

### Rent Assistance

A regular extra payment if you pay rent and get certain payments from Centrelink.

Contact Centrelink on 132 490.

[www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/rent-assistance](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/rent-assistance)

### Sickness Allowance

An income support payment if you can’t work or study for a while because of illness, injury or disability.

Contact Centrelink on 132 717.

[www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/sickness-allowance](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/sickness-allowance)

### Telephone Allowance

A quarterly payment to help with phone and internet costs if you get certain payments Centrelink.

contact Centrelink on 1800 132 594

[www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/telephone-allowance](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/telephone-allowance)

### Utilities Allowance

A quarterly payment to help with household bills if you get certain payments from Centrelink.

contact Centrelink on 1800 132 594

[www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/utilities-allowance](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/utilities-allowance)

### Youth Allowance

Financial help if you’re 24 or younger and studying, an Australian Apprentice, looking for work or sick.

Contact Centrelink on 136 150.

[www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/youth-allowance](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/youth-allowance)

### Youth Disability Supplement

An extra payment if you’re a young person with disability and on some type of income support.

Contact Centrelink on 132 717.

[www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/youth-disability-supplement](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/youth-disability-supplement)

## 4. Money management

### Basic Bank Accounts

If you get a centrelink payment or have a concession card, you may be eligible for a [fee free account](http://www.affordablebanking.info/What-is-a-basic-bank-account-.html) with your financial institution.

Contact Australian Bankers Association <http://www.affordablebanking.info/What-is-a-basic-bank-account-.html>

### Identifying Cash

Blind Citizens Australia offers several resources and fact sheets to help you identify various notes and coins. This includes “Cash Test” note identification cards, apps and how to understand tactile markings on notes and coins.

Contact: 1800 033 660

### EFTPOS Transactions

Most EFTPOS machines with separate push buttons (as opposed to touchscreen panels) include a number of tactile features to assist customers who are blind or vision impaired. These features will usually include a raised dot on the 5 key, a raised circle on the ‘ok” button and a raised cross on the “cancel” button.

For more information on how to use EFTPOS and other payment methods or, what to do if you encounter an inaccessible machine please contact us.

Contact BCA: 1800 033 660

[www.bca.org.au](http://www.bca.org.au)

### LookTel Money Reader

LookTel Money Reader is an IOS application that instantly recognizes currency and speaks the denomination.

[www.looktel.com/moneyreader](http://www.looktel.com/moneyreader)

### Audio Aided Automatic Teller Machines (ATM)

Audio Aided ATM’s utilize special keys with Pips (raised round dots) and voice over technology to assist the vision impaired to complete a transaction. The service is accessed via a headphone jack which needs to be supplied by the user.

Contact BCA: 1800 033 660

### Tax Rebates and Concessions

#### GST and Health

Health services and equipment are GST-free under certain conditions.

Website: [www.ato.gov.au/business/gst/in-detail/your-industry/gst-and-health](http://www.ato.gov.au/business/gst/in-detail/your-industry/gst-and-health)

## 5. Aids and Equipment

**Important note:**

If you have an individually funded package of supports under the National Disability Insurance Scheme or My Aged Care, you should talk to your planner or case manager about the aids or equipment you need to see if they can be funded as part of your support package.

### Job Access

Access for People with Disability provides disability employment supports including government financial and other supports for workplace modifications. It provides support for finding jobs, workplace environment, job tailoring and skills regarding disability disclosure.

Phone: 1800 464 800

Website: [www.jobaccess.gov.au](http://www.jobaccess.gov.au)

### Lions Visual Independence Adaptive Technology Grants

Lions Visual Independence is currently offering grant opportunities for the ID Mate Talking Barcode Scanner. The grant is available to those who have funding for the item through NDIS.

Phone: 1300 787 469

Website: [www.visualindependence.org.au](http://www.visualindependence.org.au)

### Low Cost PCs

#### Equipment Recycling Network Inc.

Offers cheap, secondhand PCs, to people with disabilities.

Phone: (03) 9879 5211

Website: [www.erni.asn.au](http://www.erni.asn.au)

#### WorkVentures

WorkVentures provides low cost refurbished computers. They also offer traineeships for people looking to gain IT and Business Administration Skills.

Phone: 1800 112 205

Website: [www.workventures.com.au](http://www.workventures.com.au)

### NVDA (Non-Visual Desktop Access)

NVDA is a free screen reader for Windows that provides computer access for people who are blind or vision impaired. It uses a computerized voice and can convert text to braille at the users preference.

Phone: (07) 3149 3306

Website: [www.nvda-project.org](http://www.nvda-project.org)

### TAD Custom Designed Equipment Service

TAD Disability Services provides personalized equipment, technology and services. Examples for VI / Blind might include modifying household equipment to make it tactile, or anything else that requires innovation and skill to meet a disability need. They support recreation devices and have worked with a low vision surfer to invent a waterproof goggle with telescope. If you want it and it doesn’t exist call them.

Phone: NSW 1300 663 243

Website: <http://www.solve.org.au/our-service/tad-around-australia>

## Taylored Thinking

Taylored thinking provides customized and designer mobility aids such as canes. They specialize in athletic equipment to enable blind and VI to walk, run safely. Services include basic braille equipment and individualized health and wellbeing services including exercise advice and training for guide running techniques.

Phone: 0450 710 616

Website: <https://tayloredthinking.com.au>

### Victorian State-wide Equipment Program (SWEP)

SWEP provides Victorian people who either have a permanent or long-term disability or are frail aged with subsidised aids, equipment and home and vehicle modifications to enhance their independence and facilitate community participation.

Phone: 1300 747 937

Website: <http://swep.bhs.org.au/>

### Vision Australia Further Education Bursary

The bursaries provide adaptive technology to help blind and Vision Impaired students fully participate and succeed in their chosen studies.

Phone: 1300 847 466

Website: [www.visionaustralia.org](http://www.visionaustralia.org)

## See Through My Eyes

STME offers services for blind and Vision impaired persons. They include Scholarships towards tuition costs, adaptive technology bursaries, Careers Counselling, Workplace Information sessions and advocacy.

Phone: 1300 107 754

Website: [www.seethroughmyeyes.org.au](http://www.seethroughmyeyes.org.au)

**World Access For the Blind Australia**

Orientation and mobility educators specialising in echo location and flash sonar.

Phone: 0421 360802

Website: <http://www.worldaccessfortheblindaustralia.org.au/>

## 6. Transport and Travel

### Accessible Public Transport Services

#### Tram Tracker

If you're in Melbourne, find out when your tram is coming and other travel information via your iPhone or Android device.

Website: [www.yarratrams.com.au/tramtracker](http://www.yarratrams.com.au/tramtracker)

Vline
VLine offers an app, SMS alert and social media to stay up to date with service information and timetables

Website: [www.vline.com.au](http://www.vline.com.au)

### Airport Meet and Assist Services

A meet and assist service must be requested at the time of booking. Many online forms now have a check box to indicate this service is required. The person will provide sighted guide for airport navigation needs. Contact your air-line for their specific information.

### Community Transport

Community transport or Community Connections are local / council based services that assists people with a disability and their carers for whom conventional public transport systems may not be an appropriate option. To find out more contact your local council. Please note that not all councils will have community transport options available.

### Companion Card

The Companion Card is issued to people with a significant, permanent disability, who can demonstrate that they are unable to access most community activities and venues without attendant care support. Participating organisations will issue the cardholder with a second ticket for their companion at no charge. Examples of participating organisations are entertainment companies and venues, sporting, theatres and public transport.

Phone: 1800 650 611

Website: [www.companioncard.org.au](http://www.companioncard.org.au)

Australian Disability Parking Scheme
Permit holders can park in parking spaces showing the international symbol of access and can receive concessions in most public parking spaces where the sign or meter shows specific time limits. All enquiries about permit applications, cost, eligibility and use should be directed to the relevant State or Territory authority.

Website: <http://www.dss.gov.au/australian-disability-parking-scheme>

### Home and Community Care (HACC) Program for Younger People

The HACC Program for Younger People provides basic support and maintenance services to help people with disabilities remain living at home as independently as possible. It is anticipated many clients in this program will transition to the NDIS.

Phone: 1300 253 942

Website: [www.health.vic.gov.au/hacc/ \_victoria](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/hacc/hacc_victoria)

### Mobility Allowance

A regular payment to help with essential travel costs if you have a medical condition that means you can’t use public transport. Not available for persons receiving NDIS.

Phone: Centrelink 132 717

Web: [www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/mobility-allowance](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/mobility-allowance)

Multi-Purpose Taxi Program
The MPTP assists with the travel needs of people with severe and permanent disabilities by offering subsidized taxi fares of up to $60 per trip. As at January 2018, the NDIA and Vic Government are finalising how transport support will be provided and it is recommended the website is visited for current information regarding this subsidy.

Phone:

Website: [www.taxi.vic.gov.au/passengers/mptp](http://www.taxi.vic.gov.au/passengers/mptp)

Public Transport Victoria (PTV)
The one stop shop for information about travelling on public transport including timetable information and service disruptions. Any feedback and complaints about public transport services can also be made through Public Transport Victoria.

Phone: 1800 800 007

Website: [www.ptv.vic.gov.au](http://www.ptv.vic.gov.au)

Qantas Carer Concession Card
The Qantas Carer Concession Card is issued to people with disability and high level support needs who require the full-time assistance of a carer whilst they are on the aircraft. A person is eligible if they need to have one-on-one support when seated on the aircraft for assistance with meals/drinks, transferring to the bathroom, orientation, communicating with the flight staff etc. A person is not eligible if they only need assistance boarding the aircraft, or when they arrive at their destination.

Phone: 1800 806 769

Website: <http://www.pwd.org.au/what-we-do/qantascarerconcession.html>

### Travellers’ Aid

Travellers’ Aid operates at Southern Cross Station, Flinders Street Station and Seymour Station. It provides simple, practical travel-related support and aid that helps people independently and confidently travel to work, education and leisure. Services include Emergency Travel Relief, companionship, buddy and personal guidance, tourist information and rest.

Phone: (03) 9654 2600

Website: [www.travellersaid.org.au](http://www.travellersaid.org.au)

### Victorian Patient Transport Assistance Scheme (VPTAS)

The Victorian Patient Transport Assistance Scheme (VPTAS) subsidises travel and accommodation costs incurred by rural Victorians and an approved escort(s) who have no option but to travel more than 100 kilometres one way or an average of 500 kilometres a week for one or more weeks to receive approved medical specialist services or specialist dental treatment.

Phone: 1300 737 073

Website: [www.health.vic.gov.au/ruralhealth/patient-transport-assistance.htm](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ruralhealth/patient-transport-assistance.htm)

Vision Impaired Travel Pass
The Vision Impaired Travel Pass gives free travel on public transport to customers who are legally blind. Pass holders aren't required to touch on and off, but must show the card to public transport staff when requested. Other states’ Vision Impaired cards are accepted and can be used as a flash pass.

Phone: 1800 800 007

Website: <https://www.ptv.vic.gov.au/tickets/fares/free-travel-passes/vision-impaired-travel-pass/>

## 7. Education

### Australian Network on Disability

The Australian Network on Disability connect people with disability to business. They provide Internships (including paid internships), mentorships and employer led recruitment strategies.

**Phone:** (02) 8270 9200

**Website:** [www.and.org.au](http://www.and.org.au)

### Australian Disability and Indigenous Peoples’ Education Fund

This fund was set up to assist indigenous and non-indigenous people with a disability to participate in education programs through small grants of up to $2500. Grants are provided every sixth months with applications being considered at the end of March and September each year.

Phone: (03) 9429 4210

Website: [www.adipef.org.au](http://www.adipef.org.au)

Department of Justice Disability Leadership Scholarship Program
The Disability Scholarship Program is an initiative from the department's [Disability Action Plan](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/utility/about%2Bthe%2Bdepartment/disability%2Baction%2Bplan%2B2012-16). The program aims to achieve a long-term increase in the number of qualified people with a disability employed across all areas and all levels of the public service.

Phone: (03) 8684 1706

Website: [http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/utility/careers/disability+scholarship+program#breadcrumbs](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/utility/careers/disability%2Bscholarship%2Bprogram#breadcrumbs)

### Disability Liaison / Student Support

Disability Liaison Officers are available to assist students to access and fully participate in study by negotiating their support needs and clarifying the information that will be passed on to academic staff. They facilitate reasonable adjustments to enable you to study such as accessible formats and extensions. Contact your institution for further details.

### Australian Disability Clearing House on Education and Training

This website is designed for people with disability and/or medical conditions.  It provides information and resources that may be useful for current students or potential students who are considering post-secondary education or training at university, TAFE or with a Registered Training Organisation.

Website: [www.adcet.edu.au](http://www.adcet.edu.au)

**Special consideration and Special Entry Access Scheme (SEAS)**

The Special Entry Access Scheme (SEAS) Special onsideration covers a range of access and equity programs offered by institutions including disability. The Special Entry Access Scheme (SEAS) is a single application that is sent to all the courses you apply to.

Phone: 1300 364 133

Website: [www.vtac.edu.au/who/seas.html](http://www.vtac.edu.au/who/seas.html)

## 8. Employment Services

### Disability Employment Services

Disability Employment Services providers play a specialist role in helping people with disability, injury or health conditions get ready to look for a job, find a job, and keep a job.

Phone: (03) 9012 6000

Website: [www.disabilityemployment.org.au](http://www.disabilityemployment.org.au)

**Australian Apprenticeships Incentives Program**

The Australian Government, in acknowledging the contribution people with disability make to their communities and workplaces, provides additional support to Australian Apprentices with disability to help them reach their full potential as skilled workers.

**Phone:** 13 38 73

Website: <https://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/programs/support-australian-apprentices-disability>

## 9. Entertainment

### Audio Description

**Audio** **description** is an additional narration track intended primarily for blind and visually impaired consumers of visual media (including television and film, dance, opera, and visual art). Check with the cinema, theatre or event for availability of this service.

### Arts Access Victoria

AAV drives inclusive and accessible arts and cultural sectors. They provides programs for persons with disability. They advocate and train the industry. They provide the Vic Venue guide providing comprehensive accessibility information for arts, ports and other entertainment venues in Victoria.

Phone: (03) 9699 8299

Website: [www.artsaccess.com.au](http://www.artsaccess.com.au/access-program/)

### Vision Australia Library

Members of the Vision Australia library can access an exciting range of reading materials including audio books, magazines, newspapers, Braille, podcasts, journals, references, language resources and more.

Phone: (03) 9864 9600

Website: [www.visionaustralia.org](http://www.visionaustralia.org)

**Audible**

Audible provides an app so you can purchase and listen to new release and classic books narrated by professional audio performers and celebrities. Audible only uses high quality actors and does not use synthesized voices.

Website: [www.audible.com.au](http://www.audible.com.au)

### Search engines for accessible recreation and tourism

#### My Community Directory

My community directory is the one place Australians can find quality, online health and community organisations such as sporting clubs, recreation centres, transport etc. Registered services are free or subsidized.

Website: [www.mycommunitydirectory.com.au](http://www.mycommunitydirectory.com.au)

### Voice Searches and Actions / Text To Speech

Many items within the home can now be operated with audio commands and text to speech technology. Current televisions are able to access apps such as “Google Text to Speech” or “Apple voice Over”. Home appliances such as lights can be connected to smart technology enabling voice searches and actions. An Occupational therapist from your preferred blindness organization may be able to assist you with further information.

### Theatre and the Arts

Vision Australia has a number of volunteers who dedicate their time to describing live theatre for the benefit of patrons who are blind or vision impaired. For more information, or for a list of upcoming performances:

Phone: 1300 847 466

Website:

### Travel Tours

There are specialised travel tours that cater for people with disabilities. These include:

#### Ambleside Tours

Phone: (03) 9720 9800

Website: [www.amblesidetours.com](http://www.amblesidetours.com/)

#### Traveleyes

Travel Eyes provide independent travel for people who are blind or partially sighted. Blind travellers can simply choose a holiday from their fully accessible website or audio brochure, then just book, and go! Those who travel solo no longer have to depend on family members or friends to accompany them on holiday, although sighted persons are welcome.

Phone: (02) 8006 1393

Website: [www.traveleyes-international.com](http://www.traveleyes-international.com/)

## 10. Home and Living

### Independent Living Centres Australia

Independent Living Centres Australia (ILCA) are focused on promoting and providing awareness of assistive technology. They host a community services register for resources and support related to assistive technology. They also include a directory of assistive technology products.

Phone: 1300 885 886

Website: [www.ilcaustralia.org.au](http://www.ilcaustralia.org.au)

### Red Cross

Red Cross provides services and supports through My Aged Care and NDIS. They include a service called Telecross for the frail, vunerable and isolated. They call each day to check you are ok.

Phone: **1300 885 698**

**Website:** [**https://www.redcross.org.au/get-help/community-services**](https://www.redcross.org.au/get-help/community-services)

### Telephone Services

Some telecommunications providers such as Optus and Telstra provide services that can assist people who are blind or vision impaired. Such services include: bills in alternative formats, calls connect fee exemptions, free operator assisted directory services and phone equipment such as big button phones, Easy Read Stickers, Abbreviated dialing. Some telecommunications providers also provide telephone services at discounted rates for Pension Card holders. Contact your telephone service provider for more information on available discounts.

## 11. Health

### Dental Services

Holders of a Pensioner Concession Card are eligible for dental services at a concession rate from the Dental Health Services Victoria.

Phone: 1300 360 054

Website: [www.dhsv.org.au/patient-information/fees#exemptions](http://www.dhsv.org.au/patient-information/fees#exemptions)

### Concession and Health Care Cards

Concession and health care cards can get you cheaper health services and medicines. The type of concession or health care card depends on your situation.

Phone: 13 23 00

Website: [www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/health-care-card](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/health-care-card)

### Hearing Services Program

The Australian Government Hearing Services Program aims to reduce the impact of hearing loss by providing eligible people with access to hearing services.

Phone: 1800 500 726

Website: <http://hearingservices.gov.au>

## 12. Housing

### Housing

The department of Health and Human Services provides a range of housing solutions for Victorian families and individuals needing to gain safe and permanent housing. Services include health and safety renovation loans, Crisis Accommodation, Home owner and renter support, homelessness and family violence support. To find out what services could be available to you can use the Housing Options Finder.

Phone: 1300 650 172

Website: <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au>

Land Transfer Duty
In Victoria, if you are a Pensioner and purchasing a home you plan to reside in you may be eligible for a concession. plan to reside in the home to be purchased as the principal place of residence, and can only claim the concession once. There are also stamp duty concessions available for first home buyers. For more information, contact the Victorian State Revenue Office or utilize their Land Transfer (Stamp) duty calculator.

Phone: 13 2161

Website: [www.sro.vic.gov.au](http://www.sro.vic.gov.au)

## 13. Sport

While it is still possible for people who are blind or vision impaired to participate in a range of different mainstream sporting and fitness activities, some of the below contacts may be of interest to anyone wishing to undertake training in a sport that is specifically targeted towards people who are blind or vision impaired.

### Blind Sports Victoria

Blind Sports Victoria (BSV) is a State Sporting Association dedicated to blind and vision people. They support members to identify sports they would like and help them to be able to participate. They have a list of active blind sporting events and teams including golf, running, cricket, goalball, gymnastics, soccer and more.

Phone: (03) 9822 8876
Website: [www.blindsports.org.au](http://www.blindsports.org.au)

### Bowling

Bowls Victoria is a bowling club where everyone is welcome including blind / vision impaired bowlers. To arrange your own game and supports you can contact them directly. If you need assistance learning how to play bowls with a vision impairment contact blind sports Victoria.

Phone: (03) 9861 7100

Website: [www.bowlsvic.org.au](http://www.bowlsvic.org.au)

### Cricket

In a game of blind cricket, an audible ball with bells is used so that players are able to track its movement. Other minor adjustments to the game make it easier for people who are blind or vision impaired to play, but for the most part the game of blind cricket is not too different from the traditional game. There are three different vision categories, so this game is not just for people who are totally blind. Contact the Victorian Blind Cricket Association.

Website: [www.vbca.org.au](http://www.vbca.org.au)

### Goal Ball

Goal ball is a highly competitive sport for people who are blind which is played on an indoor court. There are three players on each team and the object of the game is to roll the ball past the other team without them stopping it. The ball has bells to make it easier for players to track its movement and all players are blindfolded to allow for varying levels of vision amongst players. Contact Victorian Goal Ball Association.

Website: <http://goalball.org.au/>

### Golf

In a game of blind golf, players strike the ball in the same way as sighted players. The most fundamental role is played by the blind golfers’ caddie who acts as the golfer’s eyes and describes distances, directions and other visual elements of the game. There are three different vision categories, so this game is not just for people who are totally blind. Contact Blind Golf Australia.

Website: [www.blindgolf.com.au](http://www.blindgolf.com.au)

### Horse Riding

Riding for the Disabled (RDA) aims to give people with a disability the opportunity to enjoy all of the benefits associated with horse riding. Horse riding can be both recreational and therapeutic and this organisation has a great deal of experience working with people who are blind or vision impaired. Contact Riding for the Disabled Association of Victoria (RDAV).

Website: [www.rda.org.au](http://www.rda.org.au)

### Karate

Although many people who are blind or vision impaired have successfully completed training in mainstream martial arts, Seido Karate Dojo offers specialised classes for students who are blind or vision impaired. Once students become confident in the specialised class and understand the basic martial arts concepts and moves, they are free to join in with the other mainstream classes offered at the dojo. Contact Seido Karate Dojo.

Website: [www.seidokazoku.com.au](http://www.seidokazoku.com.au)

Seido Karate Melbourne

Website: [www.seidomelbourne.com.au](http://www.seidomelbourne.com.au)

### Sailing

Sailability aims to encourage and facilitate sailing and boating for people with a disability. Most Sailability clubs already have experience working with people who are blind or vision impaired and assisting them in developing their sailing skills, whether it is for competition or simply recreation. Contact Sailability.

Website: www.sailability.org/au

### Surfing

The Disabled Surfers’ Association provides opportunities for social events, friendship and competition for anyone with a disability who wants to give surfing a go. The association has never had a person with any disability that they have not been able to help to enjoy surfing. Contact Disabled Surfers Association.

Website: [www.disabledsurfers.org](http://www.disabledsurfers.org)

### Swish

Swish is a game for people who are blind or vision impaired that is played on a modified table tennis table. The table has a high centre-board that the ball can move underneath and side barriers that prevent the ball from going off the side of the table. The ball that is used in swish is larger than a table tennis ball and has bells inside it so that players who are blind or vision impaired are able to track it when it is moving. The ball is rolled along the table, often at great speed, with the aim of rolling it off the opponent’s end of the table. Players use a small paddle to defend their end of the table. Swish can be played at Vision Australia.

Website: [www.visionaustralia.org](http://www.visionaustralia.org)

## 14. Telecommunications Benefits and Services

### Telstra Disability Supports

Operator assisted directory helpline and call connect exemptions are available to customers who have completed an application form and provided medical evidence of their need for the service.

Phone: 1800 068 424

## 16. Miscellaneous Services and Support

### Mail for the blind

Australia Post deliver eligible domestic mail that helps the vision impaired (up to 7kg) free of charge.

Phone: 13 7678

Website: <http://auspost.com.au/parcels-mail/mail-for-the-blind.html>

### Photo Identification

Keypass
Need a valid ID to prove your age or identity. The Australia Post Keypass identity card is a photo ID card that is easy to obtain and use no matter your age. It is valid as an Australian ID across all states.

Website: <http://auspost.com.au/travel-id/keypass-identity-card.html>

#### Proof of Age Card

The Victorian Proof of Age card is used to verify that the person seeking to enter the licensed premises or purchase liquor is over 18 years of age. This card is recognised throughout Australia.

Website: <http://www.vcglr.vic.gov.au/community-services/proof-age>

## 17. Complaint-handling bodies

**Important note:**

Unfortunately, sometimes things go wrong. At some point in time, you might find yourself in a situation where you are treated unfairly because of your blindness or vision impairment. This could involve things like:

* Being harassed at school or in the workplace for reasons relating to blindness or vision impairment.
* Being refused access to a public place, such as a restaurant or café, because you are accompanied by a Guide or Seeing Eye Dog.
* Having difficulty accessing systems, services and facilities that are available to the public because they are not accessible to people who are blind.

In other situations, you might feel that a Government Agency such as Centrelink or the National Disability Insurance Agency has assessed your case incorrectly and is not providing you with the support you are entitled to.

If you experience any of these problems, there are places you can go to complain. We’ve included some key complaint-handling and dispute resolution bodies in this section, but it can still be a little confusing to know which one might apply to your own set of circumstances. If you aren’t quite sure where to start, it might be useful for you to speak to an advocate. You can find more information about advocacy services in the next section. There is also an online directory called

**Complaint Line**

The Complaint line service is an online directory and gateway to information to help you get a resolution to your complaint. They are not a dispute resolution service and can not give specific advice.

Website: [www.complaintline.com.au](http://www.complaintline.com.au)

### Consumer Affairs Victoria

Promotes consumer protection and ethical trading and ensures that consumer protection laws are properly enforced.

Phone: 1300 55 81 81

Website: [www.consumer.vic.gov.au](http://www.consumer.vic.gov.au)

### Disability Services Commissioner

An independent oversight body resolving complaints and promoting the right of people with a disability to be free from abuse.

Phone: 1800 677 342

Website: [www.odsc.vic.gov.au](http://www.odsc.vic.gov.au)

### Victorian Energy and Water Ombudsman

Investigates and resolves disputes between Victorian electricity, gas and water customers and their providers.

Phone: 1800 500 509

Website: [www.ewov.com.au](http://www.ewov.com.au)

### Victorian Health Services Commissioner

This body deals with problems with a health service or concerns about health privacy.

Phone: 1300 582 113
Website: [www.health.vic.gov.au/hsc/](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/hsc/)

### Victorian Public Transport Ombudsman

The Public Transport Ombudsman deals with complaints about Victorian public transport that members of the community have been unable to resolve directly with the public transport operators.

Phone: 1800 466 865
Website: [www.ptovic.com.au](http://www.ptovic.com.au)

### Victorian Office of the Public Advocate

Safeguards the rights and interests of Victorian people with disabilities.

Phone: 1300 309 337
Website: [www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au](http://www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au)

### Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT)

VCAT is a tribunal that hears and decides civil and administrative legal cases in the State of Victoria, Australia.

Phone: (03) 9628 9900

Website: [www.vcat.vic.gov.au](http://www.vcat.vic.gov.au)

### Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission

Responsible for eliminating discrimination in Victoria. Offers information, education and consultancy services, conducts research and provides legal and policy advice.

Phone: 1300 292 153
Website: [www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au](http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au)

### Victorian Ombudsman

The Victorian Ombudsman is an independent officer of the Victorian Parliament who investigates complaints about state government departments, most statutory authorities and local government. The Ombudsman investigates complaints about administrative actions and decisions taken by government authorities and about the conduct or behaviour of their staff. The Ombudsman is independent and impartial and provides a free service.

Phone: (03) 9613 6222
Website: [www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au](http://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au)

## 18. Advocacy Support

**Important note:**

Sometimes it can be difficult to know how to approach a matter when you have been discriminated against or treated unfairly. If you would like to talk to someone about the problem you are facing to explore the options are available to you, and advocate can help. An advocate’s job is to make sure your rights are upheld and they are there to support you to resolve your complaint.

### Blind Citizens Australia Advocacy (BCA)

Blind Citizens Australia is here to help people who require support to uphold their rights, gain access or receive services that are unreasonably impeded due to their blindness or vision impairment. Blind Citizens Australia's Advocacy staff can provide you with specialist information and advice on a wide range of issues, including discrimination, access to information, access to built environment, public transport, education, employment, income supports and other issues.

Phone: 1800 033 660

Website: [www.bca.org.au](http://www.bca.org.au)

### Aged Care Rights Service (TARS)

TARS is an advocacy service for older residents of nursing homes, hostels and retirement villages and people receiving Community Aged Care Packages.

Phone: (02) 9281 3600

Website: [www.agedrights.asn.au](http://www.agedrights.asn.au)

## 19. Legal Support

**Important note:**

Most advocacy cases are unable to provide formal legal advice. If you have a discrimination matter that is more complex and is unable to be resolved through the support of an advocate, you may need to seek legal advice and/or representation.

#### Disability Discrimination Legal Service

The Disability Discrimination Legal Service Inc. (DDLS) is a

state-wide independent community legal centre that specialises in disability discrimination legal matters. DDLS provides free legal services in several areas including information, referral, advice, casework assistance, community legal education, and policy and law reform.

Phone: (03) 9654 8644

Website: [www.communitylaw.org.au/ddls](http://www.communitylaw.org.au/ddls)