# **Blind Citizens Australia**

# **National Convention**

# **Information Pack for Volunteers**

Blind Citizens Australia (BCA) is the representative body for Australians who are blind or vision impaired. The organisation advocates on key issues and works to connect its members across the country. Its national convention, held biennially, provides the opportunity for people who are blind and vision impaired to share developments in a range of areas.

Convention 2019: Event details

Date: Friday 29 March – Monday 1 April 2019 (commencing with afternoon workshops on Friday 29 March from 1pm-5pm).

Venue: The Old Woolstore

1 Macquarie St, Hobart, Tasmania

Phone: 03 6235 5355

There will be a volunteer induction session prior to convention in the week beginning 25 March. This will include information on blindness awareness, assisting people with their orientation and mobility needs, and what is expected and *not* expected of volunteers throughout the event.

Note: Participants will have access to professional O&M support from Guide Dogs staff at certain times throughout the convention.

# **Role of Volunteers:**

Volunteers are essential to ensuring members are adequately supported throughout the convention. Our members experience a range of eye conditions from good, usable vision through to total blindness, so levels of need will vary from person to person. Volunteers will be required to assist with some or all of the following tasks:

* Helping participants to their seats
* Assisting with morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea
* Assisting people who leave the convention room during sessions
* Assisting people to move between rooms for breakout sessions
* Assisting people to locate bathrooms or water bowls for dogs during breaks
* Assisting people at the start and end of each day to find their room or local transport

# **Why volunteer:**

* Volunteering at convention is a great way to meet people from across Australia whilst learning more about blindness and vision-impairment.
* Morning-tea, lunch and afternoon-tea is provided to volunteers whose shifts coincide with breaks.
* Blind Citizens Australia can provide reimbursement for reasonable transport costs within Hobart.
* You are welcome to attend the convention dinner. Payment for this can be made when you register as a volunteer (once your application is approved).

**Before you volunteer…**

We highly recommend you familiarise yourself with the following information from Vision Australia’s website – this will help you to decide if volunteering at convention is for you and feel confident in your role. Blind Citizens Australia staff will also be available to answer any questions you may have over the weekend.

**Tips for assisting people who are blind or have low vision:**

**Approach, Ask, Assist.**

* + **Approach**: if you suspect someone may need a hand, walk up, greet them and identify yourself.
  + **Ask**: "Would you like some help?" The person will accept your offer or tell you if they don't require assistance.
  + **Assist**: listen to the reply and assist as required. Not all people who are blind or vision impaired will want assistance - don't be offended if your assistance is not required.
* Address people who are blind or have low vision by their names so they know you are speaking to them.
* Let the person who is blind or has low vision know that you have entered the room.
* Do not walk away from a person who is blind or has low vision without indicating that you are doing so - it is embarrassing and frustrating to talk to thin air.
* Let the person who is blind or has low vision take your arm as described in the [sighted](http://www.visionaustralia.org/learn-more/learning-to-live-independently/in-the-community/useful-tips-and-mobility-fact-sheets/guiding-a-person-who-is-blind-or-has-low-vision) guide fact sheet - <http://www.visionaustralia.org/learn-more/learning-to-live-independently/in-the-community/useful-tips-and-mobility-fact-sheets/guiding-a-person-who-is-blind-or-has-low-vision>
* In dangerous situations say "**STOP**" rather than "LOOK OUT"
* Do not relocate objects or furniture without telling the person who is blind or has low vision.
* Do not fill glasses or cups to the brim.
* Use ordinary language when directing or describing and be specific. Do not point, or say "over there". Direct people who are blind or have low vision to their left and right, not yours.
* Use words like "look" and "see"; they are part of everyone's vocabulary. Otherwise both you and the person who is blind or has low vision will feel awkward.
* Describe the surroundings and obstacles in a person's pathway (remember to look up as well as down). Warn of the presence of over-hangs, such as kitchen cupboards, jutting side mirrors of cars, or trees.
* Do not leave doors ajar. Close them or open them fully.
* Be aware that the person who is blind or has low vision will be disadvantaged by not seeing what is going on. Therefore talk about what is happening.
* Ask people who are blind or have low vision what they want or need. Do not direct questions through their companion.
* If people who are blind or have low vision extend their hands to shake, do so.
* When seating people who are blind or have low vision, put their hands on the back of the chair and they will then be able to seat themselves.

# **How to Register Your Interest:**

If you are available to assist for 3 to 4 hours on Friday between 12:00PM and 10:00PM, Saturday between 8:00AM and 5:00PM or Sunday between 8:00AM and 5:00PM, please email the enclosed registration form to BCA at [bca@bca.org.au](mailto:bca@bca.org.au), with the subject line “Convention Volunteer Application”. We will also be holding a sight-seeing day on Monday 1 April – although this is not a formal part of the convention and will take place outside the venue, you are welcome to offer volunteer support on this day too, but please be aware that BCA may not be able to cover admission fees to tourist attractions for volunteers.

**BLIND CITIZENS AUSTRALIA**

**CONVENTION VOLUNTEER REGISTRATION FORM**

#### 29 March – 1 April 2019

Please complete and return to [bca@bca.org.au](mailto:bca@bca.org.au) by Friday 8 March 2019.

**Contact Details**

First name:

Family name:

Date of Birth: / / (volunteers must be over 18 years of age)

Address:

Suburb:

State:

Postcode:

Telephone H:

Telephone W:

Mobile:

Email:

**Availability:**

**Induction:**

I can be available during the week beginning 25 March on the following days/times for a volunteer induction session:

Availability:

**Convention:**

I am available on Friday 29 March between the following times:

I am available on Saturday 30 March between the following times:

I am available on Sunday 31 March between the following times:

I am available on Monday 1 April between the following times:

**Please mark applicable answers with an “X”**

**I have:**

Usable low vision

Full sight

A current First Aid qualification and I am willing to act as a First Aider.

A current police check.

A current Working With Children check.

Dietary requirements (if yes please specify):

I would like to attend the Convention Dinner (Saturday 30 March): YES / NO

$60 per person (we will let you know how to pay).

**How did you find out about this volunteering opportunity?:**

THANK YOU.

Once we have received your volunteer application form we will be in touch with further details.