

Ph 1800 033 660 | E [bca@bca.org.au](mailto:bca@bca.org.au) | W [bca.org.au](http://www.bca.org.au/) | ABN 90 006 985 226

# Media Release

### Victoria Makes Travel More Affordable For People With Disability

Blind Citizens Australia (BCA) congratulates Uber and the Victorian Government for introducing subsidised Uber fares for people eligible for the multipurpose taxi program following a successful pilot last year. The organisation urges other state governments to follow Victoria’s lead to ensure all Australians with disability have access to affordable door to door transport.

Emma Bennison, CEO of BCA, explains that reliable, timely and affordable transport options are essential for Australians with disability and particularly those who are blind or vision impaired.

“Many of our members routinely access taxi subsidy schemes in their respective states. Affordable door to door transport is a non-negotiable imperative for people who are blind or vision impaired to safely and efficiently access the community. Reliable transport options allow people with disability to contribute to society without the stress of prohibitive transport costs,” she said.

“Public transport is often not a viable option to travel to activities, visit family and friends, or commute to employment on a regular basis due to the length of time it can take to travel, and the extra anxiety caused by the uncertainties which can often occur due to unreliability of public transport, including sudden changes in timetables or announcements not being reliably made about stops or stations being approached.”

Ms Bennison says BCA is keen to collaborate with other state governments to ensure that all Australians eligible for taxi subsidy programs have the same options now available to Victorians.

“Having the added flexibility of hiring an Uber at an affordable price levels the playing field, offering the choice of ride all consumers enjoy to people with disability. This sets a positive precedent, and we look forward to working with other state governments to implement similar processes.”

For more information please contact:

Kathie Elliott

Media Relations

Blind Citizens Australia

Phone: 0439 724 304

Email: kathie.elliott@bca.org.au

#### Background Info

##### Who is Blind Citizens Australia?

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. It has grown to an organisation of 3000 individual members and seven affiliated organisations.

Our mission is to inform, connect, and empower Australians who are blind or vision impaired and the broader community.

With over forty years of history, BCA has worked tirelessly “To Change What it Means to be Blind” both for Australians who experience vision loss and for blind and vision impaired people throughout the world.

Specifically, this has included:

* providing peer support
* providing individual and systemic advocacy
* facilitating information exchange
* empowering its members
* promoting positive community attitudes
* striving for high quality and accessible services which meet individual needs
* promoting research into the causes and amelioration of the impact of blindness and vision impairment

As the national voice of people who are blind or vision impaired BCA has a seat on many Government, commercial and community sector advisory bodies. BCA’s individual advocacy service is available to all Australians who experience vision loss. With a focus on issues that impact on the individual because of their blindness/vision impairment, BCA works both directly and through specialist community advocates, to resolve issues in a constructive and educative manner and draws on more formal processes where a mutually agreeable solution cannot be found.

BCA has been an active member of the World Blind Union at both the World and Regional levels since its creation in 1984. Over that period two of the senior members have held office as World President and several more have served on the World and Regional Executives and various standing committees. In November 2000 BCA was the lead organisation for the hosting in Melbourne of the WBU 5th General Assembly. BCA has also lead capacity building projects in Fiji and Vietnam and has participated in many international conferences and forums.

In association with its policy development and advocacy work, BCA has undertaken a range of blindness related research projects. Several of these resulted in published papers.

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