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# Service Charter (Draft)

## About Blind Citizens Australia

Blind Citizens Australia is the national representative organisation of Australians who are blind or vision impaired. Our mission is to inform, connect and empower Australians who are blind or vision impaired and the broader community.

We provide peer support and individual advocacy to people who are blind or vision impaired across Australia. Through our campaign work, we address systemic barriers limiting the full and equal participation of people who are blind or vision impaired. Through our policy work, we provide advice to community and government on issues of importance to people who are blind or vision impaired.

As a consumer-based organisation, our work is directly informed by lived experience of blindness and vision impairment. Our members, our directors and the majority of our staff are blind or vision impaired. The BCA constitution stipulates that any person who is blind or vision impaired has the right to membership of our organisation. Membership is free and cannot be revoked.

## Why We Need a Service Charter

Since it was founded in 1975, Blind Citizens Australia has been committed to ensuring people who are blind or vision impaired have access to high quality and accessible services that meet our needs. This commitment extends to services delivered by Blind Citizens Australia itself and encompasses services delivered to anyone who needs our assistance, including but not limited to:

* People who are blind or vision impaired, whether or not they are members of BCA;
* Members of the broader community with an interest in blindness or vision impairment, whether or not they are associate members of BCA;
* Blindness service providers;
* Government, business and community organisations;

Our Service Charter tells you what you can expect from us when receiving a service from Blind Citizens Australia and what we expect of you as the recipient of a service. It should be read in conjunction with other Blind Citizens Australia policies which can be found on our website, www.bca.org.au.

We define a service as any interaction you have with our organisation in which we offer advice, a platform for communication and peer connection, or where we undertake to represent you as an individual. We are also providing a service when we communicate with you, or you with us, whether in writing, via phone, electronically or in any other format. When accessing a service from Blind Citizens Australia, you can expect to receive services that comply with this charter and you agree to abide by it.

## What You Can Expect from Us

When receiving a service from Blind Citizens Australia, whether over the phone, in writing or in person, you can expect that:

* We will provide services to you, whether or not you are a member or associate member of Blind Citizens Australia;
* We will treat you as a person first and will only request information about your access requirements, not your disability or medical history, other than in cases where that information is necessary to enable us to provide the requested service;
* Our interactions with you will be polite, respectful and free from bullying, abuse or harassment;
* We will treat you equally, irrespective of background, ethnicity, age or gender and will work with you to understand and respond to your individual needs based on the information you provide to us;
* We will keep your information confidential, except if you agree we can share it with another party, or in cases where we are required to disclose information by law;
* We will never share your story publicly or reveal details that could identify you without your permission;
* We will provide timely, well-researched advice (excluding legal or financial advice), based on human rights principles, or refer you to another organisation if we are not able to assist you;
* Where one of our people has prior knowledge about you or a relationship with you that could compromise their objectivity or negatively impact their work with you, they will refer you to someone else in the organisation;
* We will provide information to you in your preferred format wherever possible;
* Most services will be provided free of charge. In cases where it is necessary to charge a fee, we will let you know in advance and provide financial assistance and/or payment plan arrangements wherever possible.

## Our Expectations of You

When receiving a service from Blind Citizens Australia, whether over the phone, in writing or in person, we expect that:

* Your interactions with BCA personnel and other service recipients will be respectful, polite and free from bullying, abuse or harassment;
* We will agree on service expectations up front to ensure we understand your needs and that you understand any limitations on what assistance we can offer. For instance, we sometimes need to create waiting lists to manage the demands on our advocacy service and we only provide information, advocacy and advice on issues which relate directly to blindness or vision impairment;
* You will provide us with the information required to deliver agreed services in a timely manner to enable us to offer you quality advice or representation, understanding that without such information, our ability to assist you may be limited or non-existent;
* You will let us know if we have not met your expectations through our various feedback mechanisms and doing so will have no impact on the quality of services delivered to you in the future;
* You will let us know if you have prior knowledge of, or a pre-existing relationship with the staff member providing a service to you which could negatively affect you or BCA so we can refer you to someone else;
* You will consider positively promoting the work of BCA when you receive a service you are satisfied with, however failure to do so will not negatively impact services you receive in the future.

## What if Expectations are Not Met?

### If We Fail to Meet Your Expectations

If we do not meet your expectations or you have suggestions, you can provide us with feedback which will inform service development and support continuous improvement. You can share your feedback with us in the following ways:

* Anonymously via our phone system by calling 1800 033 660 and choosing the option to leave feedback or by speaking with a member of staff;
* Sending us an email to [bca@bca.org.au](mailto:bca@bca.org.au);
* Sending us a text message on 0436 446 780;
* Using the feedback form provided on our website.

If your feedback is of a serious nature and you would like us to take action to resolve it, you can lodge a complaint. Information about how to do so can be found on our website at [www.bca.org.au](http://www.bca.org.au), or you can call us on 1800 033 660.

### If You Fail to Meet Our Expectations

If you do not meet our expectations, we reserve the right to:

* Advise you of why you are not complying with our expectations and request that you modify your behaviour within a specified time-frame;
* If you do not comply with our request, we may discontinue providing services to you until you can demonstrate that you are able to meet our expectations. If we discontinue your service, this will not impact your BCA membership status.