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Blind Citizens Australia ABN 90 006 985 226. Gifts are Tax Deductible.

Blind Citizens Australia

**ACT**

**Toolkit**

**Welcome to BCA’s ACT Toolkit.**

**Introduction**

Navigating the maze of services to find what you need, as well as being aware of the benefits you are entitled to as someone who is blind or vision impaired, can be a complex and frustrating process which can go on for months or even years if you do not have access to accurate, accessible and timely information about benefits and services. With its comprehensive toolkits, Blind Citizens Australia has come to your rescue!

Blind Citizens Australia have produced a toolkit for each Australian State and Territory, containing all the information you need about the services, benefits and entitlements available to you no matter where you live, and those which apply to each specific state.

For those who have recently lost their sight, or for those moving from one State or Territory to another, finding which benefits, entitlements and services you may be eligible for can be a daunting process.

Having access to these comprehensive tool kits will enable you to prepare before you move, and provide you with a permanent prompt that reminds you where to go for help and what is available to you. Everything from Centrelink benefits to recreational services is covered in these comprehensive guides for each state.

You can obtain a copy of the toolkit in your preferred format by contacting Blind Citizens Australia’s head office on (03) 9654 1400, or toll free, on 1800 033 660 or by downloading it from our website [www.bca.org.au](http://www.bca.org.au)

Knowledge is power, and Blind Citizens Australia seeks to empower all Australians who are blind or vision impaired by making these tool kits available. The world of services and benefits, explained in easy to read language, is now at your fingertips, in your ears, or on a computer screen near you!

**Disclaimer:**

The content in this toolkit, and its associated fact sheets, have 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 informational use only. Although every effort has been made to verify the accuracy and authenticity of the toolkits content at the time of publication, users are urged to check independently on matters of specific interest as content is subject to change without notice.

If you would like to provide comment on the content of the toolkit, either due to unintentional error or omission, please contact BCA’s National Office on the following details:   
  
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Level 3, 247-251 Flinders Lane   
Melbourne VIC 3000   
  
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Fax: 03 9650 3200   
Toll free:1800 033 660  
Email: [bca@bca.org.au](mailto:bca@bca.org.au)   
Web: [www.bca.org.au](http://www.bca.org.au/)    
ABN: 90 006 985 226

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**1. Advocacy and Legal Support**

**ACT Complaint and Dispute Resolution Bodies**

**ACT Health Services Commissioner**

The ACT Health Services Commissioner is one of three Commissioners within the ACT Human Rights Commission.

The Commissioner's mandate is to consider complaints about the provision of health services and services for older people, and complaints about contraventions of the privacy principles or of a consumer's right of access to his or her health records under the Health Records (Privacy and Access) Act 1997.

**ACT Human Rights Commission**

The ACT Human Rights Commission promotes the human rights and welfare of people living in the ACT and provides an independent, fair and accessible one-stop shop for complaints of unlawful discrimination and complaints regarding health services and services for children, youth, older people and the disabled.

Phone: 13 22 81 or (02) 6207 5111  
Website: <http://www.hrc.act.gov.au>

**ACT Office of Fair Trading**

Fair Trading assists and protects the community through the administration of Fair Trading legislation and the registration and compliance of businesses in specific industries. The main objective of the Office is to provide information to consumers to make them informed and confident when making purchases.

Phone: 13 22 81 or (02) 6207 5111  
Website: <http://www.ors.act.gov.au/community/fair_trading>

**Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency**

National statutory authority established to protect the community and guide the medical profession. The board registers doctors and investigates complaints about doctors.  
  
Phone: 1300 419 495  
Website: <http://www.ahpra.gov.au>

**Conflict Resolution Service**

CRS is the provider of Canberra based mediation and alternative dispute resolution services for the ACT...they can assist with any dispute type.

CRS offers free or low cost services for the Canberra region. There are no waiting lists which means they can help you manage and resolve your issues sooner rather than later.

Services offered include:

conflict coaching

mediation

facilitation

information and referral

community education

training and professional development

The service is confidential, impartial, easy to use and is free for low income earners.

Phone: (02) 6162 4050  
Website: <http://www.crs.org.au>

**Disability and Community Services Commissioner**

The ACT Disability & Community Services Commissioner is one of three Commissioners within the ACT Human Rights Commission.

The mandate of the Commissioner is to consider complaints about the provision of services for people with disability and / or for their carers.  
  
Phone: (02) 6205 2222

Email: email [human.rights@act.gov.au](mailto:human.rights@act.gov.au)   
Website: <http://www.hrc.act.gov.au/disability>

**Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC)**

The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner has responsibility for regulating and providing advice on the operation of the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (FOI Act). The FOI Act is the legislative basis for open government in Australia and covers Australian Government ministers and most agencies.

Phone: 1300 363 992

Email: [enquiries@oaic.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@oaic.gov.au)   
Website: <http://www.oaic.gov.au/freedom-of-information/freedom-of-information>

**Public Advocate of the ACT**

The public advocate protects the rights and interests of vulnerable people living in the ACT.

Phone: (02) 6207 0707  
Email: [pa@act.gov.au](mailto:pa@act.gov.au)  
Website: <http://www.publicadvocate.act.gov.au>

**Worksafe ACT**

WorkSafe ACT’s role is to enforce the Territory’s health and safety and workers’ compensation laws through a mixture of education and compliance activities.

Phone: (02) 6207 3000

Email: [worksafe@act.gov.au](mailto:worksafe@act.gov.au)   
Website: <http://www.worksafe.act.gov.au>

**Federal complaint and dispute resolution bodies**

**ACT Ombudsman**

The Australian Capital Territory Ombudsman investigates complaints about the administrative actions of Australian Capital Territory Government agencies and public education providers.

Phone: 1300 362 072   
Email: [ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au](mailto:ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au)   
Website: <http://ombudsman.act.gov.au>

**Fair Work Ombudsman**

The role of the Fair Work Ombudsman is to work with employees, employers, contractors and the community to promote harmonious, productive and cooperative workplaces. The Fair Work Ombudsman investigates workplace complaints and enforces compliance with Australia's workplace laws.  
  
Phone:  13 13 94   
Website: <http://www.fairwork.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx>

**Financial Ombudsman Service**

Dispute resolution processes cover; financial services, disputes including banking, credit, loans, general insurance, life insurance, financial planning, investments, stock broking, managed funds and pooled superannuation trusts.  
  
Phone: 1300 78 08 08  
Website: <http://www.fos.org.au/>

**Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman**

Dispute resolution scheme for residential and small business consumers in Australia who have a complaint about their telephone or internet service.  
  
Phone: 1800 062 058    
Website: <http://www.tio.com.au/>

**Legal Support**

**Australian Centre for Disability Law**

The Australian Centre for Disability Law is a specialist Community Legal Centre which promotes and protects the rights of people with a disability by providing free legal advice and representation in disability discrimination cases.   
For further information:

Phone 1800 800 708

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

**Community Legal Centers**

<https://www.actlawsociety.asn.au/public-information/community-legal-centres>   
  
Community legal centres provide free legal services including information, referral, advice, casework assistance, community legal education, and policy and law reform.   
  
To find a community legal centre near you, visit The National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC).

Phone: (02) 9264 9595

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

Note: The National Association of Community Legal Centres does not provide legal advice but has created a database of community legal centres in each state and territory.

**Disability Discrimination Legal Service**

The Disability Discrimination Legal Service Inc (DDLS) is a statewide independent community legal centre that specializes 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. For more information:

Phone: (02) 9654 8644

Website: <http://www.communitylaw.org.au/clc_ddls/cb_pages/about_us.php>

**Online Directory**

**Complaint Line**

Complaint line is an online directory to help you find someone who can assist you with a complaint that you haven’t been able to resolve with the service provider yourself. Complaint line has information and links to dispute resolution schemes Australia wide. Complaint line links you to important customer codes, contracts and charters, industry codes of practice and regulations, so that you can better understand your rights and the company's obligations.

Website: <http://www.complaintline.com.au/index.html>

**Tribunals**

**ACT Civil and Administrative Appeals Tribunal (ACAT)**ACAT’s purpose has been to provide people living in the ACT with a low cost, accessible, efficient and independent tribunal delivering high quality dispute resolution.

Phone:(02) 62071740  
Email: [tribunal@act.gov.au](mailto:tribunal@act.gov.au)  
Website: [www.acat.act.gov.au](http://www.acat.act.gov.au/)

**Administrative Appeals Tribunal**

The Administrative Appeals Tribunal can review a wide range of administrative decisions made by Ministers of the Australian Government, government departments, agencies and authorities and other tribunals. In limited circumstances, the Tribunal can review administrative decisions made by state government and non-government bodies. For further information:

Phone 1300 366 700

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

**Social Security Appeals Tribunal**

The Social Security Appeals Tribunal provides an appeals mechanism for reviewing decisions made by the Department of Human Services (Centrelink). For further information:

Phone: 1800 011 140

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

**2. Blindness Services**

**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: <http://www.ableaustralia.org.au/>

**Blind Citizens Australia (BCA)**

Blind Citizens Australia is the peak consumer organisation of and for people who are blind or vision impaired in Australia. 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.  
  
BCA has 15 branches around Australia including a very active Canberra branch. BCA’s ACT Branch was established in1983 and is run by volunteers.  
  
For more information about the Canberra branch, please contact ACT branch President Vicki Scheeren on;

Phone: (02) 6297 7884  
Email: [vickischeeren@southernphone.com.au](mailto:vickischeeren@southernphone.com.au)

BCA National Office

Phone: 1800 033 660  
Email: [bca@bca.org.au](mailto:bca@bca.org.au)   
Website: [www.bca.org.au](http://www.bca.org.au)

**Canberra Blind Society Inc**  
The Canberra Blind Society Inc is a provider of information, services and assistance to those in Canberra and the surrounding area who are blind or have low vision.  
  
Phone: (02) 6247 4580  
Email: [canblind@tpg.com.au](mailto:canblind@tpg.com.au)   
Website: <http://www.canberrablindsociety.org.au/>   
  
**Guide Dogs NSW/ACT**

Guide Dogs provide a range of services to guide our clients with vision loss or blindness to greater independence in various aspects of life such as mobility, accessing information, and carrying out everyday tasks. Our focus is to help our clients achieve their goals. We support our clients at every stage, tailoring services to meet changing goals and lifestyles. Guide Dogs is philanthropically funded and is also a registered National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) provider and My Aged Care provider.

Phone 1800 484 333

Website: nsw.guidedogs.com.au

Email: [chatswood@guidedogs.com.au](mailto:chatswood@guidedogs.com.au)

**Macular Degeneration Foundation**

The foundation is a National organization based in Sydney, meeting the needs of the macular degeneration community across Australia. 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 organizations, 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. Most of these services are delivered free of charge.

Phone: 1300 847 466  
Website: [www.visionaustralia.org](http://www.visionaustralia.org)

**3. Education**

**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 six months with applications being considered at the end of March and September each year.

Phone: (03) 9429 4210   
Website: <http://www.adipef.org.au/>

**Austudy (Department of Human Services)**Austudy provides financial assistance to individuals aged 25 and above who are studying fulltime or undertaking an apprenticeship. To claim Austudy, you will also have to have been living in Australia as an Australian resident for a minimum of two years.

Phone: 13 23 00  
Website: [www.humanservices.gov.au](http://www.humanservices.gov.au).

**Disability Liaison Officers**

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. If you are studying at a University or TAFE, you are able to contact the disability liaison unit to help you with accessing information in your correct format or other disability needs. Contact your university or TAFE institution for further details.

**Australian Catholic University (Canberra campus)**

Contact: Mr Trevor Ianna Disability Adviser - Equity and Disability Unit Australian Catholic University 127 Phillip Ave Watson ACT 2602

Phone: (02) 6209 1170   
Email: [disabilityadviser.sig@acu.edu.au](mailto:disabilityadviser.sig@acu.edu.au)

**Australian National University**

Contact: The Manager Disability Services Centre Building 17, Student Facilities Building Australian National University Canberra ACT 0200

Phone: (02) 6125 5036

Email: [disability.adviser@anu.edu.au](mailto:disability.adviser@anu.edu.au)

**University of Canberra**

Contact: Ms Melanie Kovacs Manager, UC AccessAbility

Student Equity and Support Unit University of Canberra ACT 2601

Phone: (02) 6201 5233

Email: [melanie.kovacs@canberra.edu.au](mailto:melanie.kovacs@canberra.edu.au)

**Education Entry Payment**

If you are already receiving a payment such as the Disability Support Pension or Newstart Allowance and are enrolled in an approved course, you may be eligible to receive the Education Entry Payment to help cover your study costs. Your eligibility for this payment will be determined when you provide Centrelink with proof of enrolment in an approved course. For further information, contact the Department of Human Services

Phone: 13 23 00

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

**Elspeth Crawford Bursary**

Canberra Blind Society (CBS) offers an annual bursary of $1500, from the Elspeth Crawford Fund, to support the endeavours of a secondary school student or group of students in achieving personal goals. For more information, or for a copy of the application form, please contact CBS.

Phone: (02) 6247 4580

Email: [canblind@tpg.com.au](mailto:canblind@tpg.com.au)

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

**Mature Age Study Resource**

The mature study website is a resource that is designed to provide information to mature age people with disability considering tertiary education at TAFE, university or Registered Training Organisations (RTOs). The website provides information on all aspects of tertiary study in Australia including scholarships, financial assistance and other key information.

Website: <http://www.adcet.edu.au/Mature/>

**Newstart Allowance**

If you are aged 22 or over and are currently looking for work, studying or training, you may be eligible to receive the Newstart allowance. If you have not yet completed year 12 or an equivalent certificate II course, you will be required to undertake further training before being considered eligible for the Newstart Allowance. For further information contact the Department of Human Services.

Phone: 13 23 00

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

**Pensioner Education Supplement**

The Pensioner Education Supplement is available to individuals already receiving a pension such as the Disability Support Pension, Disability Support Pension (blind) and the Carer’s Payment. The supplement aims to assist recipients with the cost of full or part time study. For further information, contact the Department of Human Services.

Phone: 13 23 00

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

**Quantum Print Disability Scholarship and Award Program**This program awards adaptive technology prizes to successful scholarship applicants on an annual basis. Winners may choose the form of adaptive technology that will best suit their needs from a set prize list, which includes:

Desktop and handheld electronic magnifiers

Text-to-speech devices

Book readers

Daisy players/recorders

Magnification and screen reading software

You must be a permanent Australian resident with a print disability to apply for this scholarship program and must also fit into one of the following categories:

Primary education

Secondary education

Tertiary education/TAFE

To apply for the program, you must fill in an application form and attach a supporting letter explaining in 500 words, how having a print disability affects you and how the adaptive technology offered under the program would assist you in your studies. For more information contact Quantum.

Phone: 1300 883 853  
Website: <http://www.quantumrlv.com.au/scholarships/>

**Sickness Allowance**

While this short term allowance is primarily targeted at individuals who are temporarily unable to work due to injury or illness, in some cases it may also be available to students who are enrolled in full time study. For further information, contact the Department of Human Services.

Phone: 13 23 00

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

**Special Entry Access Scheme (SEAS) Applications**

The Special Entry Access Scheme (SEAS) is the umbrella program run by most institutions for special entry places. The Special Entry Access Scheme (SEAS) is for applicants who have experienced educational disadvantage.

Students who are blind or have low vision are eligible to apply for the Special Entry Access Scheme under Category 5 which applies to applicants who have experienced educational disadvantage because of their vision impairment. For further information, contact the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre.

Phone: 1300 364 133

Website: <http://www.vtac.edu.au/who/seas.html>

**Student Start-up Scholarship**If you are a full-time student undertaking an approved scholarship course at a higher education institution and are receiving Youth Allowance, Austudy or ABSTUDY Living Allowance, you will receive the Student Start-up Scholarship. You'll receive this scholarship at the beginning of each traditional tertiary semester to help with the up-front costs of studying, such as textbooks and specialised equipment. If you're eligible you'll receive the full amount of the Start-up Scholarship, even if you're not on the maximum payment rate from Centrelink. For further information, contact the Department of Human Services.

Phone: 13 23 00

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

**Student Support**

Some Further Education Providers, such as TAFE and University, provide special assistance for students with a disability. Students may be eligible to receive course material in an accessible format and may also seek extensions with assessment tasks or special provisions for exams to allow them to complete their studies in a fair and equitable manner. To find out more, simply phone the TAFE or University you wish to enroll in ask to speak to a Disability Liaison Officer or Teacher Consultant for Vision Impairment.

**Vision Australia Further Education Bursary**

Each year, Vision Australia awards further education bursaries to a select number of students who are blind or vision impaired to assist them in purchasing adaptive technology to assist them in their studies. Bursaries are available to students of any age who are enrolling to study in a certificate IV TAFE course or higher, or an under-graduate or post-graduate degree through university. For further information talk contact Vision Australia about the application requirements for the further education bursary and upcoming bursary application dates on 1300 847 466.

Phone: 1300 847 466

Website: [www.visionaustralia.org/living-with-low-vision/learning-to-live-independently/further-education-support/vision-australia-further-education-bursary](http://www.visionaustralia.org/living-with-low-vision/learning-to-live-independently/further-education-support/vision-australia-further-education-bursary)

**4. Employment Services**

**Disability Employment Services**

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

Disability Employment Australia has a database of disability employment services. To find a disability employment service near you;

Phone (03) 9012 6000 or visit: <https://disabilityemployment.org.au/>

As of July 2014, providers in the ACT include:

**Braddon**

Nexus Human Services

Ostara Australia

**Canberra**

LEAD Employment ACT

Vision Australia Employment Services Canberra

**Melrose Park**

Workskil Head Office

**Phillip**

Advance Personnel

**Employment Assistance Fund**

Formerly known as the Workplace Modifications Scheme, this scheme is funded by the Commonwealth government to provide people with a disability with the equipment that they need to be able to function in the workplace; such as CC-TVs, Braille note takers and screen-reading software. The Workplace Modifications Scheme is open to job-seekers who are registered with an employment service provider, and to people who are employed for a minimum of eight hours work per week.

**Job in Jeopardy Assistance**If you are at risk of losing your job because you have a disability, Job in Jeopardy Assistance can help by seeing what can be done to keep you with your current employer. Job in Jeopardy Assistance is free and is available through direct registration with a Disability Employment Provider.

Through a Disability Employment Provider, Job in Jeopardy Assistance may include:

advice about redesigning your job so you can keep working

having your workplace assessed to see how it can be changed to make it easier for you to work

having your workplace changed so you can continue to work

specialised equipment to help you do your job

To be eligible for Job in Jeopardy Assistance, you must have been employed for at least eight hours a week on average over the last 13 weeks, and not receiving assistance from a Disability Employment Services Provider.

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

**5. Entertainment**

**Cinema**

Audio description is becoming increasingly available in cinemas across Australia. When accessing audio description, patrons are provided with a small receiver and headset to allow them to use the service in a private and dignified manner.   
  
For more information on audio description at the cinema, visit the Media Access Australia’s website.

Website: <http://bit.ly/1fX9nZF>

To find an accessible cinema in your area visit the Media Access website.

Website: <http://bit.ly/1cmqkYL>

A guide on how to find accessible movie sessions on cinema websites can be found here: <http://bit.ly/1gdZrKQ>

**Companion Card**The Companion Card is available to assist people to access ticketed events; including movies, live performances, public transport and concerts. The Companion Card Scheme recognizes the need for some people to have an attendant or carer accompany them to such events and allows the cardholder to have their companion attend free of charge. To obtain an application form, contact:

Phone: 1800 893 044

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

**DVD**

Many commercially available DVDs include an audio described track for people who are blind or vision impaired. If a title has audio description, it will often include text on the back of the case such as “audio described”, “DTS”, “audio narration” or “narration for the visually impaired”. Most DVDs will also include the following logo:

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Which can be found at:

<http://www.mediaaccess.org.au/dvds/equipment-reviews-and-how-to-videos/how-to-identify-a-dvd-that-has-access-features>

Media Access Australia keeps a comprehensive list of titles available with audio description. The list is available at:

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

Most public libraries will also stock a number of audio described DVDs.

**EASE - Entertainment Access Service**

Entertainment Access Service (EASE) provides access to low cost tickets for the student and friends or assistants attending entertainment events. A newsletter which is available in regular print, large print or tape lists events for which EASE has access to tickets. EASE will also assist with meeting particular needs where possible (eg obtaining tickets which give suitable access to events.)   
  
Audio description is available at certain theatre performances and this is noted in the newsletter. Subscription costs $25.00 a year. They also publish a book with reviews of city and regional venues, maps detailing seating and access points are also shown.   
For further information contact Arts Access:

Phone: (03) 9699 8299 or (03) 9699 8497 (Tickets). Visit the website [www.artsaccessprogram.org](http://www.artsaccessprogram.org).

**Film and Television**

Audio description makes it possible for people who are blind or vision impaired to follow and enjoy many mainstream movies and TV shows. (AD) is the verbal representation of visual elements of a movie, TV show, live performance or tour. Information is provided between natural pauses and dialogue and aims to give the blind consumer an understanding of elements such as scenes, costumes, facial expressions and actions.

**Reading**

All Vision Australia clients are eligible to loan books from the Vision Australia Information Library Service. The list of titles is growing all the time and there are a range of different formats to choose from, including audio and Braille. Vision Australia can also assist you in finding a talking book player that will meet your needs. Additionally, Vision Australia clients are eligible to have 360 pages of text transcribed into an alternate format each year.

If you are already a client of the Vision Australia Information Library Service, you can access any of the above services.

Phone: (03) 9864 9600.

If you are not yet a client, please speak to your case coordinator within Vision Australia or phone Vision Australia’s National Contact Centre. Further Information:

Phone: 1300 847 466.

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

Most public libraries also have a wide range of audio books available for loan. Contact your local library for more information.  
  
**Television**

There are currently two talking set top boxes on the market that provide speech output for the benefit of people who are blind or vision impaired. Speech output allows consumers to know what channel they are on, what program is currently airing and be able to access a full electronic program guide independently. Both the Hills talking set top box and the Bush talking set top box sell for around $200 and are available through Vision Australia or direct from the manufacturer. For more information or to purchase a talking set top box, contact Vision Australia.

Phone: 1300 847 466.

Alternatively, you can contact

Bush Australia

Phone: (02) 9714 3434

or

Hills Tech Life

Phone: 1800 68 50 32

**Theatre and the Arts**  
**Canberra Theatre Company**Canberra Theatre Centre is Canberra’s premier performing arts venue, providing world class performing arts and entertainment to the people of Canberra and surrounding regions.

Canberra Theatre Company offers:

Tactile Tours

Audio Described Performances

Mobility Assistance

Special Seating Requests

Phone: (02) 6275 2700

Website: [www.canberratheatrecentre.com.au/site/more-access-info.php](http://www.canberratheatrecentre.com.au/site/more-access-info.php)

**National Gallery of Australia**

The NGA offers the following to visitors who are blind or vision impaired:  
Braille sculpture garden brochure, which are available at the information desk

Braille guide to the Gallery

Tours for people with vision impairment (bookings essential)

Phone: (02) 6240 6504  
Email [eventbookings@nga.gov.au](mailto:eventbookings@nga.gov.au)  
Website: <http://nga.gov.au/Visiting/Access.html>   
  
**Vision Australia**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. To find out more information contact Vision Australia. Alternatively, a list of upcoming performances can be accessed from the Vision Australia.

Additionally, Cassettes, Cd’s or Mp3s providing narrative description of visual information can be accessed at many attractions around VIC.

Phone: 1300 847 466  
Website: [www.visionaustralia.org.au](http://www.visionaustralia.org.au)

**Travel Tours**

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

**Ambleside Tours**

Phone: (03) 9720 9800

Website: <http://amblesidetours.com/>

**Canberra and the ACT Disabled Travel**

Phone: (07) 3715 7348

Website: <http://www.canberradisabledtravel.com/entertainment/>

**Cane and Able**

Phone: (07) 3715 8322

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

**Traveleyes**

Phone: (02) 8006 1393

Website: <http://www.traveleyes-international.com/>

**Search engines for accessible recreation and tourism**

**Australia For All**

Australiaforall.com is an international web site designed by and for people with disabilities, which is entirely to accommodation and leisure venues which are accessible to people with disabilities.

Phone: (07) 4125 7771

Website: <http://www.australiaforall.com/index.html>

**Nican**

Nican is a national Australian information service in the area of Recreation, Tourism, Sport and Arts for people with a disability. There is also a Nican App which enables searching of recreation, leisure and support services that cater for and/or are accessible to people with disabilities any location. The App removes some of the barriers people with disabilities face when accessing their community by providing information about recreation and sport, tourist accommodation, travel and services.

To download the App, visit iTunes:  <https://itunes.apple.com/au/app/nican/id664462511?mt=8>

Phone: (02) 6241 1220 or freecall 1800 806 769  
Website: <http://nican.com.au/>

**6. Home and Living**

**Home and Community Care Services (HACC)**

The Home and Community Care (HACC) Program provides community care services to frail aged and younger people with disabilities, and their carers.  
  
The HACC Program provides services such as domestic assistance, personal care as well as professional allied health care and nursing services, in order to support older Australians, younger people with a disability and their carers to be more independent at home and in the community, and to reduce the potential or inappropriate need for admission to residential care.  
  
HACC Agencies in the ACT include:

Belconnen Community Services Phone: (02) 6264 0200  
Northside Community Services Phone: (02) 6257 2255  
Woden Community Services Phone: (02) 6260 5400  
Gungahlin Regional Services Phone: (02) 6228 9200  
Communities @ Work Phone: (02) 6288 9077  
Community Connections Phone: (02) 6296 1133  
Community Options Phone: (02) 6295 8800  
Carers ACT Phone: (02) 6296 9900  
Home Help Services ACT Phone: (02) 6287 3777  
Tandem Phone: (02) 6287 2870  
Just Better Care Phone: (02) 6162 1670  
Kincare Phone: 1300 733 510  
Anglicare Canberra and Goulburn Phone: (02) 6245 7100   
CatholicCare Canberra & Goulburn Phone: (02) 6295 4300  
  
**Independent Living Centre**

The ACT Independent Living Centre (ILC) is a service of ACT Health.  The ILC provides information and advice on assistive technology and techniques to assist people to improve their quality of life and maintain their independence. Staff can assist with information about products, other services and resources, however equipment is not available for sale or hire.

The ILC is staffed by Occupational Therapists, an Allied Health Assistant and a Registered Nurse.  The service is available to all members of the public, including people with a disability, injury or illness, carers, community groups, health professionals, organisations and students. Most services are free.

Personal alarms

Telephone: (02) 6205 1900   
Email: [ilcact@act.gov.au](mailto:ilcact@act.gov.au)  
Website: <http://ilcaustralia.org.au>   
Display Address: 24 Parkinson Street, Weston ACT   
Open: 9.00 am to 4.30 pm, Monday to Friday

Personal alarms allow you and your loved-ones to feel confident about your decision to live at home independently.

You can search for "Personal Alarms" on Independent Living Centre (ACT) website to see a description of dozens of different brands or you can give them a call.

**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 exemption, free operator assisted directory services and other phone equipment such as:

[Big Button/Multi-Purpose Phone](http://www.telstra.com.au/abouttelstra/commitments/disability-services/disability-equipment-program/index.htm#tab-Telephones)

[Standard Rental Phone](http://www.telstra.com.au/abouttelstra/commitments/disability-services/disability-equipment-program/index.htm#tab-Telephones)

[Smart Payphones](http://www.telstra.com.au/abouttelstra/commitments/disability-services/additional-products-services/index.htm#smartpayphones)

[EasyRead Stickers](http://www.telstra.com.au/abouttelstra/commitments/disability-services/disability-equipment-program/index.htm#tab-Accessories)

[EasyRead Memory Store Sheet](http://www.telstra.com.au/abouttelstra/commitments/disability-services/disability-equipment-program/index.htm#tab-Accessories)

[Abbreviated Dialing](http://www.telstra.com.au/abouttelstra/commitments/disability-services/additional-products-services/index.htm#abbreviateddialling)

[Call Back](http://www.telstra.com.au/abouttelstra/commitments/disability-services/additional-products-services/index.htm#callback)

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.

**7. Equipment**

**Canberra Blind Society**

The Canberra Blind Society (CBS) is a provider of information, services and assistance to those in Canberra and the surrounding area who are blind or have low vision. They supply aids and equipment and offer Adaptive Technology training.

Phone: (02) 6247 4580

Email: canblind@tpg.com.au

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

**Employment Assistance Fund**Formerly known as the Workplace Modifications Scheme, this scheme is funded by the Commonwealth Government to provide people with a disability with the equipment that they need to be able to function in the workplace; such as CC-TVs, Braille note takers and screen-reading software. The Workplace Modifications Scheme is open to job-seekers who are registered with an employment service provider, and to people who are employed for a minimum of eight hours work per week. All individuals wishing to access Workplace Modifications funding will be subject to a Job Access assessment, where the individual is assessed within the work context to identify the equipment that would best meet their needs.

Phone: 1800 464 800  
Website: [www.jobaccess.gov.au](http://www.jobaccess.gov.au)

**Job in Jeopardy Assistance**If you are at risk of losing your job because you have a disability, Job in Jeopardy Assistance can help by seeing what can be done to keep you with your current employer. Job in Jeopardy Assistance is free and is available through direct registration with a Disability Employment Provider.

Through a Disability Employment Provider, Job in Jeopardy Assistance may include:

advice about redesigning your job so you can keep working

having your workplace assessed to see how it can be changed

to make it easier for you to work

having your workplace changed so you can continue to work

specialised equipment to help you do your job

To be eligible for Job in Jeopardy Assistance, you must have been employed for at least eight hours a week on average over the last 13 weeks, and not receiving assistance from a Disability Employment Services Provider.

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

**Lions Visual Independence Adaptive Technology Grants**

Lions Visual Independence is currently offering grant opportunities for the ID Mate Talking Barcode Scanner and the Kapten Plus GPS. For further information or to obtain an application form:

Phone: 1300 787 469

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

**Low Cost PC’s: WorkVentures and Centrelink**A joint partnership between not-for-profit organization WorkVentures and Centrelink makes it possible for Centrelink customers to access low cost refurbished computers. There are three different types of computer packages to choose from: laptop, desktop with peripherals or desktop only. Computer packages start from $300. To find out more about the different computer packages available contact WorkVentures.

Phone: 1800 112 205

Website: [www.workventures.com.au](http://www.workventures.com.au/).  
  
**Quantum Reading Learning Vision Print Disability Scholarship Program**This program awards adaptive technology prizes to successful scholarship applicants on an annual basis. Winners may choose the form of adaptive technology that will best suit their needs from a set prize list, which includes:

Desktop and handheld eletronic magnifiers

Text-to-speech devices

Book readers

Daisy players/recorders

Magnification and screen reading software

You must be a permanent Australian resident with a print disability to apply for this scholarship program and must also fit into one of the following categories:

Primary education

Secondary education

Tertiary education/TAFE

To apply for the program, you must fill in an application form and attach a supporting letter explaining in 500 words, how having a print disability affects you and how the adaptive technology offered under the program would assist you in your studies. To obtain an application form or to find out more about the program, contact Quantum Reading Learning Vision.

Phone: 1300 883 853

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

**Quantum Reading Learning Vision Seniors Grant**

As with the scholarship program, there are a number of prizes available including electronic magnifiers, screen reading software and daisy players. To apply for the program, you will need to complete an application form and state in 50 words or less how having a print disability affects you in your daily life and how the prizes on offer would assist you to do the things that you miss the most. To obtain and application form or to find out more about the grant, contact Quantum technology

Phone: 1300 883 853

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

**Vision Australia Further Education Bursary**

Each year, Vision Australia awards further education bursaries to a select number of students who are blind or vision impaired to assist them in purchasing adaptive technology to assist them in their studies. Bursaries are available to students of any age who are enrolling to study in a certificate IV TAFE course or higher, or an under-graduate or post-graduate degree through university. Talk to staff at Vision Australia about the application requirements for the further education bursary and upcoming bursary application dates.

Phone: 1300 847 4666

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

**8. Financial Support**

All of the payments listed in this resource are administered by the Department of Human Services, formerly known as Centrelink. To find out more about a particular support payment, you can contact the Department of Human Services.

Phone: 13 23 00

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

**Age Pension (Blind)**

To be eligible for this pension, you must:

Be an Australian citizen or hold permanent resident status

Have resided in Australia for the last ten years

Be of legally blind status, as determined by a health professional. The definition of “legal blindness in Australia is visual acuity (clarity) of no greater than 6/60 and/or a visual field of no greater than 10 degrees after correction.

If male, be at least 65 years of age

If female and born before 1949, be at least 62 years of age

If female and born after 1949, be at least 65 years of age

While income received from the Age Pension (Blind) is considered as taxable income, it is assessed differently to the Aged Pension. If you are already on the Age Pension, it may be beneficial to speak to someone at Centrelink about transferring to the Age Pension (Blind) as it may better suit your circumstances.

By quoting your customer reference number (CRN), you may also be entitled to subsidies for gas, water, electricity and a range of other services.

**Age Pension vs Disability Support Pension (Blind) – What are the differences?**

The following information is based on an article by Aileen McFadzean which was published in the June 2014 edition of BCA News after being reviewed in October 2012 to include the most up-to-date information.

People who receive the Disability Support Pension (DSP) (Blind) do not have to change to the Age Pension (Blind) at retirement age.

The DSP (Blind) is available without means testing and is not a taxable benefit for individuals of working age. However, the DSP (Blind) can be considered as income when calculating for additional supplements such as rent assistance. A rate calculation considering income and assets is made and compared to a rate calculation that is not means tested. The higher of the two rates is paid if the individual is eligible.

When an individual reaches retirement age the payments for DSP (Blind) and Age Pension (Blind) are the same; both pensions are taxable and must be included as taxable income.

There are some advantages and disadvantages to both pensions. In order to receive payments such as the Pensioner Education Supplement or Education Entry Payment, a person needs to be on the DSP (Blind), as a person on the Age Pension (Blind) will not be considered eligible for these allowances.

The DSP (Blind), however, has limited portability. From January 2013, customers who receive DSP (Blind) can be absent from Australia for up to 6 weeks; although individuals who are totally blind may apply for indefinite portability. The Age Pension (Blind) allows individuals to travel overseas for up to 6 months while receiving their pension (supplementary payments such as rent assistance reduce after 6 weeks).

If you do not want to be changed to the Age Pension (Blind) you should contact Centrelink prior to reaching Age Pension age. If the change has automatically happened, you can appeal the cancellation of the DSP (Blind). You have 13 weeks from the date that you were advised of the cancellation to appeal if you have been financially disadvantaged and want arrears to be paid.

**Austudy**

Austudy provides financial assistance to individuals aged 25 and above who are studying full time or undertaking an apprenticeship. To claim Austudy, you will also have to have been living in Australia as an Australian resident for a minimum of two years.

**Carer Allowance**

If you are a parent or carer that provides daily support to a child or adult with a disability, you may be eligible to receive the Carer Allowance. The Carer Allowance is a supplementary payment 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.

**Carer Payment**

If you are a carer who is unable to support yourself through substantial participation in the workforce due to the demands of your caring role, you may be eligible to receive the Carer Payment.

**Disability Support Pension (Blind)**

To be eligible for the Disability Support Pension (Blind), you must:

Be permanently legally blind. The definition of “legal blindness in Australia is visual acuity (clarity) of no greater than 6/60 and/or a visual field of no greater than 10 degrees after correction.

Be over the age of 16 and under the Aged Pension age

Be an Australian citizen or hold permanent resident status

Have been residing in Australia continuously for ten years (unless your permanent blindness occurred in Australia)

If you are deemed eligible to receive the Disability Support Pension (Blind), you are entitled to receive the maximum pension rate. While this pension is income and assets test free, any allowances you are paid in addition to DSP (Blind) such as Rent Assistance will be subject to income and assets testing.

Income earned from the Disability Support Pension (Blind) prior to retirement age is not classified as taxable income and does not need to be declared on your tax return. After an individual reaches retirement age, they may elect to remain on the Disability Support Pension (Blind) or to transfer to the Age Pension. To find out which option might be best for your set of circumstances, please refer to the article in this section entitled “Age Pension Vs Disability Support Pension (Blind)”.

**Education Entry Payment**

If you are already receiving a payment such as the Disability Support Pension or Newstart Allowance and are enrolled in an approved course, you may be eligible to receive the Education Entry Payment to help cover your study costs. Your eligibility for this payment will be determined when you provide Centrelink with proof of enrolment in an approved course.

**Essential Medical Equipment Payment**

If you experience an increase in energy costs as a result of using essential medical equipment that is necessary to manage your disability or medical condition, you may be eligible for the Essential Medical Equipment Payment, which is paid on an annual basis.

**Financial Information Service**

Centrelink operates the [Financial Information Service](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/financial-information-service) which provides independent, free and confidential services. The service can provide advice on dealing with a broad range of financial issues. To make an appointment, or get more information about the Financial Information Service, you can:

Phone: 132 300 - to make an appointment

To request booklets, leaflets and fact sheets about investment products:

Phone: 136 357 - to find out more about seminars and to make a seminar booking.

**Medicare Levy Exemption**

Medicare is the scheme that gives Australian residents access to health care. To help fund the scheme, most taxpayers pay a Medicare levy of 2.0% of their taxable income. People who are on the blind pension, aged between 18 and 65 years old are exempt from paying the Medicare levy.

When you are over 65 years of age, the blind pension and aged pension blind are considered to be taxable payments. You will need to lodge a tax return, which will determine if you are required to pay all or part of the medicare levy for that year.

It is recommended that you speak to your tax accountant about the medicare levy, as they will be able to advise on your specific financial circumstances.

To apply for the Medicare levy exemption or for more information:

Phone: 13 28 61

Website: <https://www.ato.gov.au/Individuals/Medicare-levy/Medicare-levy-exemption/>

**Mobility Allowance**

The Mobility Allowance is paid to people with a disability who experience difficulty accessing public transport. To qualify for this allowance, you must:

Have a disability

Be at least 16 years of age

Be living in Australia

Be an Australian citizen or hold permanent resident status

Be engaged in a number of qualifying activities

Qualifying activities for this allowance include:

Looking for work

Volunteer work

Paid employment

Vocational training

Independent living and life skills training

Mobility Allowance is not income and assets tested and the income you receive from the allowance is not classified as taxable income.

**Newstart Allowance**

If you are aged 22 or over and are currently looking for work, studying or training, you may be eligible to receive the Newstart allowance. If you have not yet completed year 12 or an equivalent Certificate II course, you will be required to undertake further training before being considered eligible for the Newstart Allowance.

**Pensioner Education Supplement (PES)**

The Pensioner Education Supplement is available to individuals already receiving a pension such as the Disability Support Pension, Disability Support Pension (Blind) and the Carer Payment. The supplement aims to assist recipients with the cost of full or part time study.

**Rent Assistance**

If you are already a Centrelink customer and are required to pay rent for your current place of accommodation, you may be eligible to receive extra financial help. The amount of support provided may vary depending on your circumstances, such as the amount of rent that you are required to pay and the number of people residing in the place of residence.

**Sickness Allowance**

This is a short term allowance for people who are temporarily unable to work as a result of injury or illness. In some cases, this allowance may also be available to students who are enrolled in full time study.

**Telephone Allowance**

If you already receive a qualifying pension, such as a Disability Support Pension, you may be eligible to receive the Telephone Allowance; a quarterly allowance that aims to assist with the cost of maintaining a home phone and internet connection. Your eligibility for this allowance should be reviewed when you make a claim for other payments, however you may wish to contact the Department of Human Services for further information.

**Utilities Allowance**

If you already receive a qualifying pension, such as a Disability Support Pension, you may be eligible to receive the Utilities Allowance; a quarterly allowance that aims to assist with the cost of gas, electricity, water etc. Your eligibility for this allowance should be reviewed when you make a claim for other payments, however you may wish to contact the Department of Human Services for further information.

**Youth Allowance**

If you are 16 years of age and are enrolled in an apprenticeship, looking for full time work, and training or are sick, you may be eligible to receive Youth Allowance. If you have not yet completed year 12 or an equivalent Certificate II course, you may be required to undertake further training to be considered eligible for the allowance. In some circumstances, Youth Allowance may also be paid to a student whose parents are on a limited income.

**Youth Disability Supplement**

If you already receive some support from Centrelink and you have a disability, you may be eligible to receive additional financial support through this supplement.

**9. Health and Wellbeing**

**Ambulance Services - Fee Exemptions**

ACT Pensioner Concession and Health Care Cardholders (valid at the time of service delivery) are entitled to free emergency ambulance services within the ACT.

When interstate, ACT Pensioner Concession and Health Care Cardholders are entitled to free emergency ambulance services from an approved ambulance provider only if that state participates in reciprocal arrangements with the ACT. It is strongly recommended that you check your entitlements prior to travelling interstate by contacting the ACT Ambulance Service as these arrangements change from time to time.

Phone: (02) 6207 9980

**Dental Services (Public)**

ACT Health provides a comprehensive dental services, including:

Child and youth dental services to all children under the age of 14 years who live or attend an ACT school. Young people over the age of 14 with access to a Centrelink-issued Pension concession or Health Care Card can also access these services.

Adult dental services offer a range of services for ACT residents who are recipients of a Centrelink issued Pension Concession or Healthcare card.

For more information, go to:

Website: [www.health.act.gov.au/health-services/community-based-health-services/dental](http://www.health.act.gov.au/health-services/community-based-health-services/dental)

**Essential Medical Equipment Payment**

This is an annual payment that is provided to individuals who experience an increase in energy costs as a result of the essential medical equipment that is required to manage their disability or medical condition. For further information, contact the Department of Human Services.

Phone: 13 23 00

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

**Health Care Card**

The Health Care card is designed to alleviate the cost of medication for low income earners and benefit recipients. Card holders may also be entitled to bulk bill GP appointments at the discretion of the doctor. For further information on the Health Care Card, contact the Department of Human Services.

Phone: 13 23 00

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

**Hearing Services**

The Australian Government Hearing Services Program provides eligible people with access to a range of free and subsidised hearing services including: a comprehensive hearing assessment performed by a qualified hearing practitioner; help with hearing loss and communication needs, support and rehabilitation services and access to a wide range of high quality hearing devices. You can receive repairs and batteries to support your hearing device for a small fee. Holders of a Pensioner Concession Card may be eligible to receive a hearing services voucher from the Office of Hearing Services. In addition, National Disability Insurance Scheme participants may access hearing services through the program if referred for services by their DisabilityCare Australia Planner. For further information or to apply for the program please visit the Office of Hearing Services.

Phone: 1800 500 726

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

**Home and Community Care (HACC) Program ACT**The Home and Community Care (HACC) Program provides community care services to frail aged and younger people with disabilities, and their carers.  
  
The HACC Program provides services such as domestic assistance, personal care as well as professional allied health care and nursing services, in order to support older Australians, younger people with a disability and their carers to be more independent at home and in the community, and to reduce the potential or inappropriate need for admission to residential care.  
  
HACC Agencies in the ACT include:

Belconnen Community Services             Phone: (02) 6264 0200

Northside Community Services               Phone: (02) 6257 2255

Woden Community Services                   Phone: (02) 6260 5400

Gungahlin Regional Services                  Phone: (02) 6228 9200

Communities @ Work                             Phone: (02) 6288 9077

Community Connections                         Phone: (02) 6296 1133

Community Options                                 Phone: (02) 6295 8800

Carers ACT                                              Phone: (02) 6296 9900

Home Help Services ACT                        Phone: (02) 6287 3777

Tandem                                                    Phone: (02) 6287 2870

Just Better Care                                       Phone: (02) 6162 1670

Kincare                                                     Phone: 1300 733 510

Anglicare Canberra and Goulburn           Phone: (02) 6245 7100

CatholicCare Canberra & Goulburn         Phone: (02) 6295 4300

**Personal Alarms**

Personal alarms allow you and your loved-ones to feel confident about your decision to live at home independently.

You can search for "Personal Alarms" on Independent Living Centre (ACT) website to see a description of dozens of different brands or you can give them a call.

Phone: (02) 6205 1900

Email: [ilcact@act.gov.au](mailto:ilcact@act.gov.au)   
Website: http://ilcaustralia.org.au

**Pharmacy Concessions**

The National Health Scheme has a feature known as the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. This allows for an item prescribed under the National Health Scheme to be charged at reduced rate. For other items the normal charge applies. For further information, contact the Department of Health.

Phone: 1800 020 613

Website: <http://www.pbs.gov.au/pbs/home>

**Sickness Allowance**

This is a short term allowance for people who are temporarily unable to work as a result of injury or illness. In some cases, this allowance may also be available to students who are enrolled in fulltime study. For further information, contact the Department of Human Services.

Phone: 13 23 00

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

**10. Housing**

**ACT Water and Sewerage Rebate**

If you hold a current Pensioner Concession card, Health Care card or Veterans' Affairs gold card, you may be eligible for a rebate on your electricity and/or water and sewerage charges. For further information or to apply for the rebate.

Phone: ActewAGL on 13 14 93

Website: <http://www.actewagl.com.au/Help-and-advice/Your-account/Rebates/ACT-water-and-sewerage-rebate.aspx>

**Bond Loan Scheme**

Bond loans can be borrowed interest free from the Department of Human Services to assist individuals wishing to rent privately. These loans are for bonds only and cannot be used for rent in advance or moving costs. The full amount of the bond loan must be paid back at the end of the tenancy.

You are eligible for a bond loan if:

You meet the bond loan income and asset eligibility limits

You are a permanent resident of Australia

Your share of the rent is not more than 55 per cent of your gross (before tax) weekly income

You do not own or part own a house, flat or unit

You have repaid any previous bond loans, and

You do not owe any money relating to previous or current public tenancies.

To apply contact your local housing office or visit the

Department of Human Services website for further information.

Website: <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/housing-and-accommodation/private-renter-assistance/bond-loan-scheme>

**Council Rate Rebates: Pensioner Assistance**

Rates are levied on property owners to provide funding for a wide range of municipal and other essential services to the ACT community.

Property owners who receive a Centrelink pension with entitlement to a Pensioner Concession Card, or a War Veteran’s pension, may be eligible for a rebate of up to 50% of their rates. If you are currently receiving a pensioner rebate for a particular property and you cease to be an eligible pensioner or you no longer reside in that property, then you must contact the ACT Revenue Office and advise of the changed circumstances so that your rebate can be adjusted accordingly.

For more information call the ACT revenue office

Phone: (02) 6207 0049

Website: <http://www.assistance.act.gov.au/concession_card_holder/housing_and_rates/home_ownership/general_rates_rebates_and_deferments>

**Home Buyers Concession Scheme**

The Home Buyer Concession Scheme is an ACT Government initiative, administered by the ACT Revenue Office, to assist persons in purchasing residential land or a home, by charging duty at a concessional rate.

The eligibility criteria under the Home Buyer Concession Scheme vary depending on the date the transaction to purchase the property was entered into.

For more information contact the ACT Revenue Office.

Phone: (02) 6207 0028

Website: <http://www.revenue.act.gov.au/home-buyer-assistance/pensioner-duty-concession>

**Home and Community Care Services (HACC)**

The HACC program is designed to support people whose capacity for independent living is at risk, or who are at risk of premature or inappropriate admission to long-term residential care. Services include:

Domestic assistance (home help or housekeeping)

Personal care

Nursing (community nursing, home nursing)

Allied health services (physiotherapy, podiatry, dietetics, etc)

Food services (meals on wheels and centre-based meals)

Planned activity groups

Property maintenance

Respite services

Friendly visiting, Telelink, respite and transport services provided by volunteers.

For a list of Home and Community Care suppliers in the ACT; go to:

Website: <https://www.yourcare.com.au/suppliers/act/assessment/hacc>

**Pensioner Duty Concession**

The Pensioner Duty Concession Scheme (PDCS) is an ACT Government initiative, administered by the ACT Revenue Office. The PDCS assists eligible pensioners who move to accommodation more suited to their needs (for example, moving from a house to a townhouse) by charging duty at a concessional rate. The eligibility criteria under the Pensioner Duty Concession Scheme vary depending on the date the transaction to purchase the property was entered into.

For more information, contact the ACT Revenue Office.

Phone: (02) 6207 0028

Website: <http://www.revenue.act.gov.au/home-buyer-assistance/pensioner-duty-concession>

**11. Money Management**

**Cash Test**If you have trouble differentiating between the notes in your wallet, you can obtain a “cash test” from Blind Citizens Australia free of charge. The cash test is a small, portable plastic device which slips into your wallet and allows you to measure the length of the note using either Braille or tactile markings. As the different bank note denominations differ in length, this method allows you to independently determine what note you are holding.

Phone: 1800 033 660

**Free Financial Counselling**

The **Australian Government** funds a free Financial counselling hotline which is open from 9:30am to 4pm, Monday to Friday. When you call the number you will be automatically transferred to the phone service in your State or Territory. Calls from mobile phones may incur a fee from the mobile phone carrier.

Phone: 1800 007 007  
Website: <https://www.moneysmart.gov.au/>

**Moneysmart Financial Counselling**

A free service offered by community organisations, community legal centers and some government agencies. Financial counsellors can help you solve your money problems.

**Talking Automatic Teller Machines (ATM)**

Most of the Major banks, such as the National Australia Bank, St George, ANZ and the Commonwealth Bank have started implementing talking ATMs for the benefit of consumers who are blind or vision impaired. You might like to contact your bank to see it they have talking ATMs available and where these might be located. When using one of these machines, you simply need to take along a set of headphones and plug them into the headphone jack that is provided on the machine. You will then be given instructions on how to complete your transaction.

**Tax Rebates and Concessions**

**Adaptive Equipment Medical Expense Rebates**The cost of certain equipment designed for people who are vision impaired is eligible for the Adaptive Equipment Medical Expenses Rebate. The medical expense rebate means you can claim 20% of all eligible expenses above $1,250. The approved products include a talking computer, a reading system, and a CCTV. It may also include braille related products. For more information, see your tax consultant.

**Specialist Equipment Tax Concessions**Equipment which is specifically designed and made for people with disabilities is exempt from sales tax and import duties under Item 80 of the “Schedule of the Sales Tax Exemptions and Classifications Act”. Speak to the retailer at the time of purchase. You will be asked to sign a form which states that the goods are sold under the provisions detailed in this section of the Act. Retailers can seek clarification from the Australian Tax Office.

Phone: (03) 9275 2397   
Website: <http://www.ato.gov.au/>

**12. 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 Cricket NSW/ACT**

Cricket is a wonderful sport which is played over the summer months of the year. The game is very similar to a standard one day cricket match. The main variations are:

The ball is audible

All bowling is performed underarm and the bowler must call 'play' immediately prior to bowling the ball.

The pitch has a line marked half way along its length. For a delivery to be legal, it must bounce on both sides of this line before reaching the batsman.

A bowler who is totally blind uses a caller behind the stumps for direction.

The batsman is permitted a caller who may give the batsman a 'call' as to whether the ball is 'straight', 'off' or 'leg'.

Batsmen may be restricted in the time they can spend at the crease.

Contact: Stephen Fagg

Phone: (02) 6112 8440

Email on [act\_blind\_cricket@hotmail.com](mailto:act_blind_cricket@hotmail.com)  
Website: <http://www.visionaustralia.org/about-us/events/event/2012/11/22/vision-impaired-sports-act-(visact)---goal-ball-and-blind-cricket>

**FIT-Ability Tandem Cycling (Canberra Region)**

The FIT-Ability Tandem Cycling program offers tandem cycling opportunities principally to vision impaired people in the Canberra region, as well as to those with other disabilities who would otherwise be unable to cycle independently.

FIT-Ability has a number of tandem bikes, both road and recreational style, for the use of participant cyclists. Contact Lindy and Julie.

Phone: 0402 113836

Email: [info@fitability.org.au](mailto:info@fitability.org.au)

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

**Goalball**

Goalball is a fast paced sport specially designed for people who are blind or have low vision. Goalball is a Paralympic sport with an objective to roll the ball to the other end of the court past your opponents. For more information on social events, competitions and how to get involved contact the following:

Email: Meredyth Pettit at [goalball@visact.org.au](mailto:goalball@visact.org.au)

Website: [visit the Vis ACT website](http://www.visact.org.au/sports/goalball/)

**NICAN**

Nican is information on recreation, tourism, sport and the arts for people with disAbilities and supports an Australian society where any recreational opportunity values diversity, supports freedom and choice and strengthens inclusive communities.

Nican aims to create active and dynamic national links between people, places and resources that improve access to recreation experiences for people with disAbilities and their communities.  
  
Phone: 1800 806 769

Email: [info@nican.com.au](mailto:info@nican.com.au)   
Address: Unit 5, 48 Brookes Street, Mitchell ACT 2911

**Pegasus Riding for the Disabled ACT**

Pegasus is a not-for-profit community organisation that provides equestrian activities for people with disabilities. They bring horses and people together to achieve their potential.

Phone: (02) 6254 9190

Email: [admin@pegasusact.com.au](mailto:admin@pegasusact.com.au)

Address: 119 Drake Brockman Drive, Holt, ACT 2615

Website: <http://www.pegasusact.com.au/>

**Sailing on Lake Tuggeranong**

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 assisted them in developing their sailing skills, whether it is for competition or simply recreation.  
  
Email: [sailabilityact@gmail.com](mailto:sailabilityact@gmail.com)  
Postal Address: PO Box 1749, WODEN ACT 2606  
Website: <http://www.sailability.org/au/act/>

**Tenpin Bowling**

People who are blind or vision impaired take part in tenpin bowling in the same way as fully sighted people with only minor modification.  Tenpin bowling is a popular sport amongst people who are blind or vision impaired, providing the opportunity for social games or advancing further into competition with the blind National Tournament held in Australia yearly, and World Championships.

Interested in forming a team? Contact Justin Simpson

Phone: 0428 551 595  
Email: [tenpin@visact.org.au](mailto:tenpin@visact.org.au)

**Vision Impaired Sports ACT (VISACT)**

Vision Impaired Sports ACT (VISACT) was formed to assist people who are blind or have low vision to get involved in sporting and recreational activities.  The main opportunities are goal ball and blind cricket.

**13. Transport**

**2013 - 2018 Action Plan for Accessible Public Transport in the ACT**

The ACT Government has now released the updated 2013 – 2018 Action Plan for Accessible Public Transport in the ACT continuing the Government’s ongoing commitment to work toward an accessible public transport system for all members of the ACT community.

People with disabilities who experience difficulty using public transport and would like to provide feedback or make a complaint are encouraged to contact Public Transport Regulation.

Phone: (02) 6205 4585.

If you would like a hard copy of the Action Plan or require a copy in an alternative format, Please contact Public Transport Regulation.

Phone: (02) 6205 4585

Email: [meredyth.pettit@act.gov.au](mailto:meredyth.pettit@act.gov.au)

**ACT Regional Community Bus Service**The ACT’s Regional Community Services operate a flexible Regional Community Bus Service for ACT residents who are isolated due to a lack of other viable transport options.

The buses operate from Monday to Friday, generally within their own regional area. Pickup and set down points can be negotiated when making a booking.

People who may be eligible to use the service include:

Seniors with mobility or confidence problems

People living in nursing homes/retirement facilities

People with a permanent or temporary disability

People with health problems who cannot use regular ACTION bus services

People who are eligible for Home and Community Care transport but cannot access them for various reasons e.g. cannot self transfer

Carers accompanying a person described above

Parents with young children who are socially isolated and lack transport options

People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who lack support networks and have limited transport options

Website: <http://www.assistance.act.gov.au/adult/transport_and_registration/act_regional_community_bus_service>

**ACT Taxi Subsidy Scheme**

The ACT Taxi Subsidy Scheme (TSS) provides financial assistance to ACT residents with a disability or significant mobility restriction that prevents them using public or community transport. The Scheme supports social inclusion and economic participation of community members who would otherwise be at risk of social isolation. The TSS is intended to assist members with their transport needs for essential activities such as attending medical appointments, employment, social activities, and visiting family, but is not intended to meet all transport costs.

Phone: (02) 6207 1930  
Email: [acttaxischeme@act.gov.au](mailto:acttaxischeme@act.gov.au)

Website: <http://www.assistance.act.gov.au/child/transport_and_registration/taxi_subsidy_scheme>

**Community Bus Service**The community minibus service is for seniors and other people who are isolated in their communities through a lack of transport options for:

Seniors with mobility or confidence problems

People living in residential care/nursing homes

People with mental illness who cannot cope with using regular ACTION services

People with permanent or temporary disability

Carers accompanying the above

Parents with young children who are socially isolated through a lack of transport options

People with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, including new migrants, whose transport options may be limited due to factors such as their unfamiliarity with transport services and/or lack of support networks; and

People who are eligible for HACC transport services but cannot access them, for example, people who require transport for ‘cross-catchment’ trips, or people with a disability who use wheelchairs and cannot self-transfer into vehicle seats.

Qualified drivers from our team can be booked from between 7.00 am and 7.00 pm Monday to Friday. Limited trips are available on weekends.

The service operates on a gold coin donation from passengers.

Phone: (02) 6126 9090  
Website: <https://commsatwork.org/community-transport>

**Mobility Allowance**The Mobility Allowance is paid to people with a disability who experience difficulty accessing public transport. To qualify for this allowance, you must:

Have a disability

Be at least 16 years of age

Be living in Australia

Be an Australian citizen or hold permanent resident status

Be engaged in a number of qualifying activities

Qualifying activities for this allowance include:

Looking for work

Volunteer work

Paid employment

Vocational training

Independent living and life skills training

The Mobility allowance is not income and assets tested and the income you receive from the allowance is not classified as taxable income. To find out more about the Mobility Allowance and how you can apply, contact the Department of Human Services.

Phone: 13 23 00

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

**Mobility Disability Parking Permit**

From November 2010, the Australian disability parking permit is issued in the ACT to eligible people with a mobility disability and to organisations that provide transport for people who meet the eligibility criteria.

Within the ACT a mobility disability parking permit consists of the ACT mobility parking permit (with the permit number and expiry date displayed) inserted into the clear plastic pocket of the Australian disability parking permit. Both permits need to be displayed together as a single permit, with the permit number and expiry date clearly visible from outside the vehicle.

The RTA is the administering authority for the new Australian disability parking permit within the ACT. This includes the application and renewal processes.

The Australian disability parking permit is recognised Australia wide. However, when travelling interstate permit holders should check local arrangements for parking concessions as they may vary.

To be eligible for a mobility parking permit in the ACT a person must:

Be unable to walk and/or have pain or difficulty in walking 100 metres

Require the use of crutches, a walking frame, callipers, a scooter, a wheelchair or other mobility aid; or

Be blind.

Phone: 13 22 81

Email: [rus@act.gov.au](mailto:rus@act.gov.au)   
Website: <http://www.rego.act.gov.au/parking/parkingadpp.htm>

**Qantas Carer Concession Card**

The Carer Concession Card is issued to people with a disability who require the assistance of a carer while travelling. Individuals who require assistance with toileting, meals or communicating with staff while on the plane, or who requires assistance when reaching their destination is eligible. The Carer Concession Card can only be used on domestic travel and entitles a person to 10% off their own fare (or 50% when travelling business class) and 50% off the fare of their nominated carer.

Phone: 1800 806 769   
Website: [www.nican.com.au](http://www.nican.com.au)

**Real Time Passenger Information System (RTPIS) for ACTION Buses**

The RTPIS, known as NXTBUS, from late 2014, will track ACTION buses and provide information on arrival times.

Features of the NXTBUS system include:

Live online service tracking

The ability to identify if a bus is easy access

An indicator showing when a bus is equipped with a bike rack

Onboard multifunction displays (visual and audio) with next stop announcements

On demand audio announcement system at bus stations and selected major stops.

Phone: 13 17 10   
Website: <http://www.action.act.gov.au/timetables_and_maps/real-time-passenger-information-system-rtpis>   
  
**Vision Impaired Travel Pass**

Vision Impaired Travel Pass holders are entitled to free travel on regular route services, including an attendant, if required. This pass is accepted by interstate transit authorities where provision allows for free or subsidised travel for vision impaired persons. Please check your travel entitlements with the appropriate authority prior to commencement of your journey

Vision impaired travel passes issued by another Australian State or Territory Government are also accepted, and receive free travel on regular route services. Attendants of the pass holder also travel for free under these passes.

The Vision Impaired Travel Pass is issued by MyWay Administration Office to eligible recipients.

Phone: 13 17 10  
Website: <http://www.transport.act.gov.au/catch_a_bus/myway/concessions>

**14. Utilities**

**ACT Water and Sewerage Pension Rebate**

If you hold a current Pensioner Concession card, Health Care card or Veterans' Affairs gold card, you may be eligible for a rebate on your electricity and/or water and sewerage charges.

Water and sewerage — pension rebate

For Veterans' Affairs gold card and Pensioner Concession cardholders, the water and sewerage rebate is calculated as a percentage of your water and sewerage supply charges.

For Health Care cardholders, the rebate calculation is the same but the rebate applies only to your water charges.

Your rebate will be listed as a separate line item on your invoice as "Pension rebate" or "Health Care card rebate water", as appropriate.

You must be listed as the current account holder to be eligible.

To be eligible for the rebate/s for each billing period:

The property relating to the account has to be the sole or principal place of residence of the applicant

The applicant has to provide ActewAGL with details of the concession card. The Pensioner Concession card or Health Care card has to be issued to the applicant by Centrelink and the gold card (certain types only), by the Department of Veterans' Affairs

Only one rebate will be allowed for an account in each billing period.

If there is more than one water and sewerage account holder the pension rebate is dependent on the number of cardholders.

**Community Services Directorate**

The Community Services Directorate administers a range of concessions which aim to improve the affordability of essential services including taxi, spectacles, utilities and access to venues and events, for people with disability, low-income earners and people experiencing disadvantage.

Website: <http://www.assistance.act.gov.au>

**Energy Concession ACT & NSW**If you hold a current Centrelink Pensioner Concession card (PCC), Centrelink Low Income Health Care card (HCC) or Veterans' Affairs Pensioner concession Card, the electricity account holder may be eligible for an energy concession.  
  
The Commonwealth Seniors Health Care Card is not an eligible card under the scheme.  
  
ActewAGL manages the energy concession on behalf of the ACT and NSW state governments. The energy concession covers both electricity and gas and is passed to you via your electricity account. The energy concession is calculated on a daily basis and is shown as a separate line item on each electricity invoice.

The Program aims to achieve a balance in the standard of living and access to essential services for all members of the ACT community.  
  
For each billing period, a concession will be applied if the following provisions are met:

The account is in the name of the person applying for the concession

The property to which the account relates is the sole or principal place of residence of the person applying for the concession

A current Centrelink Pensioner Concession card (PCC), Centrelink Low Income Health Care card (HCC) or Veterans' Affairs Pensioner concession Card

For Health Care Card holders a new application needs to be made each time a new card is issued

Application has been made to ActewAGL providing the necessary details of eligibility

Applicant agrees for the information supplied to ActewAGL to be verified with Centrelink and Veterans' Affairs to confirm eligibility or to supply relevant documentation directly to ActewAGL (please ring 13 14 93 to discuss options)

One concession only will be allowed in respect of an account for each billing period.

Phone: 13 14 93

**15. Other Entitlements**

**Articles for the Blind**

Australia post will deliver eligible items identified as being used to aid the blind for free or at concessional rates. All parcels must be mailed by or to either an individual who is blind or an organisation that is recognised as serving people who are blind.  
  
Eligible items include:

Documentation that is written in Braille

Aids for the teaching of Braille

Special paper used to produce Braille

Any form of speech recording to be used by the blind

All letters and parcels under 7kg are delivered free of charge. These items must include either an “Articles for the Blind” label which can be obtained from Australia post, or must have the words “Material for the Blind” or a similar label clearly printed on the packaging. For further information, contact Australia Post.

Phone: 13 7678

Website: <http://auspost.com.au/index.html>

**Concession Stamps - Australia Post**

If you have a Federal government concession card, you may be eligible for reduced rates on domestic stamps, and other offers, which include a free booklet of five concession stamps, ability to purchase up to 50 concession stamps per year, discount on mail hold and mail redirection, and a free MyPost concession card and digital mailbox.

The following Australian Federal Government concession cards are accepted as proof of eligibility for the scheme:

Pensioner Concession Card

Health Care Card

Commonwealth Seniors Health Card

Department of Veterans' Affairs Card

Veterans' Repatriation Health Card

You can visit or phone your local Post Office for further information, or download an application form:

Website: <http://auspost.com.au/parcels-mail/mypost-concession-account.html>

**Photo Identification**  
**Keypass**

The Australia Post Keypass identity card is an identification card showing your photo, name, address, date of birth and signature. The card is accepted as proof of age for entry into venues throughout Australia which display a sign saying they accept the card as proof of identity. To apply for the card, visit your local Australia Post or download the application form online at:

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

**Proof of Age Card**To obtain a Proof of Age card the applicant must be 18 years of age or older on the day of application. The application must be made in person at any Canberra Connect Shopfront or the Civic Driver Licence Service and provide original copies of both Proof of identity and residency and Proof of age.

Phone: 13 22 81  
Email: [rus@act.gov.au](mailto:rus@act.gov.au)   
Website: <http://www.rego.act.gov.au/aboutus/infoproofofage.htm>