# Blind Citizens Australia logo

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# Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Toolkit

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## Blind Citizens Australia logo

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## 1. Introduction

### Welcome to Blind Citizens Australia ACT Toolkit

Navigating the maze of services to find what you need, as well as being aware of the benefits you are entitled to as a person 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 toolkits 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 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 toolkits 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 and Feedback

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 or 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 feedback on the content of the toolkit, either due to unintentional error or omission, please contact BCA on 1800 033 660 or bca@bca.org.au

##  2. Advocacy and Legal Support

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

### 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) 6205 2222
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: <https://www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au/s/fair-trading>

### 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 or (02) 5119 5518
Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au
Website: <https://www.ombudsman.act.gov.au/>

### Administrative Appeals Tribunal

The Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) 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: 1800 228 333

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

### Advocacy For Inclusion

Advocacy for Inclusion (AFI) is a cross-disability organisation providing both individual and systemic advocacy on both ACT and National issues. AFI’s advocacy is based on the social model of disability and a human rights framework acknowledging the International Convention on the Rights of People With disabilities. Information on systemic advocacy including media presence is available on the website.

Phone: (02) 6257 4005

Website: <https://www.advocacyforinclusion.org>

### Aged Disability and Carers Advocacy Service (ADACAS)

ADACAS provides both individual and systemic advocacy for people with disabilities and also for older people and carers. ADACAS services include assistance with NDIS AAT appeals and its service extends to southern NSW.

Phone: (02) 6242 5060

Website: <https://www.adacas.org.au>

### Australian Financial Complaints Authority (AFCA)

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: 1800 931 678
Website: https://www.afca.org.au/about-afca/rules-and-guidelines/previous-edr-schemes

### 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>

### Australian Human Rights Commission

The Australian Human Rights Commission can investigate and resolve complaints of discrimination based on a person’s sex, disability, race, age, or sexual preference.

Phone: 1300 656 419

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

### Blind Citizens Australia (BCA) Advocacy Support

If you or someone you know has faced discrimination due to blindness or vision impairment, BCA may be able to help. BCA’s Advocacy staff can provide specialist information and advice on a wide range of issues, including:

* Access to information
* Access to premises and the built environment
* Public transport
* Education
* Employment
* National Disability Insurance Scheme
* My Aged Care
* Blindness related income supports, such as the Disability Support Pension (blind) and Aged Care Pension (blind).

Wherever possible, BCA will aim to provide you with the necessary advice, tools and strategies to allow you to resolve a problem on your own. If you do require a bit of extra help though, BCA may be able to provide you with additional support or representation.

If BCA are not able to support you, BCA will provide a referral to another organisation.

BCA’s advocacy services are provided nationally over the phone or via email. BCA does not provide face-to-face advocacy support.

Advocates decide on a case by case basis to offer assistance depending on availability and resources. If this duty cannot be fulfilled, Advocates reserve the right to refer the individual as necessary.

Phone: 1800 033 660

Email: bca@bca.org.au

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

### 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 Community Legal Centres Australia.

Phone: (02) 9264 9595

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

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

In the ACT: Canberra Community Law:

Phone: (02) 6218 7900

Website: <https://www.canberracommunitylaw.org.au>

### Complaint Line – Online Directory

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>

### **Conflict Resolution Service (CRS)**

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) 6189 0590
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: human.rights@act.gov.au
Website: <http://www.hrc.act.gov.au/disability>

### 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: <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/>

### **Freedom of Information (FOI)**

The Freedom of Information Act 2016 (the FOI Act) gives individuals the legal right to:

* access government information unless access to the information would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest;
* ask for personal information to be changed if it is incomplete, out-of-date, incorrect or misleading; and
* appeal a decision about access to a document, or a decision in relation to a request to amend or annotate a personal record. FOI rights are subject to exemptions to protection the personal information of others and government operations.

The Information Access Unit of the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate administers the ACT FOI Act and can assist you with FOI inquiries. Staff of Access Canberra can also assist you with FOI applications.

Phone: 132 281

Email: cmteddfoi@act.gov.au

Website: <https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/functions/foi>

The Federal Government also has a FOI Act which applies to its services and agencies. Contact the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner:

Phone: 1300 363 992

Email: enquiries@oaic.gov.au
Website: <https://www.oaic.gov.au/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) 6205 2222
Email: PublicAdvocateReferrals@act.gov.au
Website: <https://hrc.act.gov.au/act-public-advocate-upholding-your-rights-through-advocacy-oversight/>

### 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/>

### 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: 13 22 81

Email: worksafe@worksafe.act.gov.au
Website: <http://www.worksafe.act.gov.au>

3. Service providers for people who are blind or vision impaired

### Able Australia

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

Phone: 1300 225 369
Website: <http://www.ableaustralia.org.au/>

### Albinism Fellowship of Australia (AFA)

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

Phone: 1300 22 16 19

Email: secretary@albinismaustralia.org

Website: <https://albinismaustralia.org/>

### Blind Citizens Australia (BCA)

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

Phone: 1800 033 660

Email: bca@bca.org.au

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

BCA has a number of branches around Australia including an ACT branch. BCA’s ACT branch was established in1983 and is run by volunteers.
For more information about the ACT branch, please contact the ACT branch President.

ACT branch president: Robert Altamore

Phone: 0423 931 753
Email: altamr@bigpond.com

### Canberra Blind Society

Canberra Blind Society provides information, services and assistance to people who are blind or have a vision impairment in Canberra and the local region.

Phone: (02) 6247 4580
Email: canblind@canberrablindsociety.org.au
Website: <http://www.canberrablindsociety.org.au/>

### **Deafblind Australia**

Deafblind Australia represents and advocates for people with deafblindness and works to improve supports and services for them.

Website: <https://www.deafblind.org.au/>

### Eyes for Life Canberra

Eyes for Life Canberra (EFLC), provides individually tailored advice, counselling, and support services to people of all ages who are coming to terms with, or living with, a vision impairment.

EFLC offers people who have been recently diagnosed with a vision impairment, the opportunity to discuss their condition, ask questions, and receive guidance on what to do next.

EFLC works with people who are experiencing a vision impairment to help identify barriers and develop strategies to enable them to maintain their independence and fully participate in the activities of everyday life.

Phone: (02) 6176 3470

Email: info@eflc.org.au

Website: <https://eflc.org.au/>

### **Guide Dogs NSW / ACT**

Guide Dogs provide a range of services to guide their clients with vision loss or blindness to greater independence in various aspects of life such as mobility, accessing information, and carrying out everyday tasks. Their focus is to help their clients achieve their goals. Guide Dogs support their 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 436 364

Website: <https://nsw.guidedogs.com.au/>

Email: stleonards@guidedogs.com.au

### Macular Disease Foundation Australia

The foundation is a national organisation based in Sydney, meeting the needs of the macular disease 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)

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

### NextSense

NextSense is a not-for-profit and registered NDIS provider that provides dedicated, innovative, and customised services aimed at breaking down barriers for children, adults, and families of people with hearing or vision loss.

Phone: 1300 581 391

Website: <https://www.nextsense.org.au/>

### Retina Australia

Retina Australia is committed to raising funds for research into the detection, prevention, treatment and cure of inherited retinal dystrophies. Through its state member organisations, crucial support and information is provided to the newly-diagnosed and to those whose vision is deteriorating.

Phone: 1800 999 870

Email: info@retinaaustralia.com.au

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

Email: info@visionaustralia.org

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

## 4. Disability Care and Support Schemes

### My Aged Care

People who acquire vision loss after the age of 65 will need to access support through My Aged Care. There are two types of support packages available through My Aged Care:

* Home care packages, designed to enable people to continue living in their homes, and;
* Residential care packages for individuals who need to transition to an aged care facility.

An assessment is required to determine eligibility.

Phone: 1800 200 422

Website: <https://www.myagedcare.gov.au/>

### National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

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

Phone: 1800 800 110

Website: <https://www.ndis.gov.au/>

### National Injury Insurance Scheme (NIIS)

The NIIS is a no-fault scheme that provides lifetime care for individuals who have suffered significant injury including permanent legal blindness. The injury needs to be caused by a motor vehicle, workplace, medical or general accident.

Website: <https://treasury.gov.au/programs-initiatives-consumers-community/niis>

## 5. Education Benefits and Services

### Australian Disability and Indigenous Peoples’ Education Fund

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

Phone: 0421 865 604

Email: info@adipef.org.au

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

### Australian Disability Clearing House on Education and Training

The Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET) is funded by the Australian Government. It provides information and resources that may be useful for current students or potential students who are considering post-secondary education or training at university, TAFE or with a Registered Training Organisation.

Phone: (03) 6324 3615

Email: admin@adcet.edu.au

Website: <https://www.adcet.edu.au/>

### Australian Network on Disability

The Australian Network on Disability connect people with disability to organisations. They can find you a mentor to improve your career skills and knowledge to help you find employment. If you’re a university student in your last two years of study, they can bring you together with organisations offering internships to help you get practical skills and work experience.

Phone: (02) 8270 9200 or 1300 363 645

Email: info@and.org.au

Website: <https://www.and.org.au/>

### 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. For further information, contact Services Australia.

Phone: 132 490

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

Specific page on website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/austudy>

### Education Entry Payment

If you are already receiving a payment such as the Disability Support Pension 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 Services Australia.

Phone: 132 490

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

Specific page on website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/education-entry-payment>

### 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 Services Australia.

Phone: 132 490

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

Specific page on website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/pensioner-education-supplement>

### Student Support

Disability Liaison Officers are available to assist students to access and fully participate in study by negotiating their support needs and clarifying the information that will be passed on to academic staff. 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 and ask to speak to a Disability Liaison Officer or Teacher Consultant for Vision Impairment.

#### **Australian Catholic University (Canberra campus)**

Contact: Access and Disability Advisor, Access and Disability Service, Australian Catholic University, 127 Phillip Avenue Watson ACT 2602

Phone: (02) 6209 1182
Email: AccessAndDisability.Canberra@acu.edu.au

Website: <https://www.acu.edu.au/>

Specific page on Website: <https://www.acu.edu.au/student-life/student-services/disability-support>

#### **Australian National University**

Contact: Access and Inclusion office, Building 154 The Di Riddell Building, Australian National University, Canberra ACT

Phone: (02) 6125 5036

Email: access.inclusion@anu.edu.au

#### **University of Canberra**

Contact: Inclusion Advisor, Inclusion UC, Student Equity and Support Unit, University of Canberra, ACT 2601

Phone: (02) 6201 5233

Email: inclusion@canberra.edu.au

Student Start-up Loan
If you are a full time student undertaking an approved course at a higher education institution and are receiving Youth Allowance, Austudy or ABSTUDY Living Allowance, you may be eligible to receive the Student Start-up Loan. You can get the loan up to two times a year to help with the costs of studying, such as textbooks and specialized equipment. The loans are tax free and you don’t need to declare them as income. Once you start earning a certain amount of income you will need to pay back the loan. For further information, contact Services Australia.

Phone: 132 490

Website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/>

Specific page on website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/student-start-up-loan>

### 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 847 466

Website: <https://www.visionaustralia.org/>

Specific page on website: <https://www.visionaustralia.org/services/funding/other-funding/further-education-bursary#eligibility-criteria>

### Youth Allowance

Financial help if you’re 24 or younger and a student or Australian Apprentice, or 21 or younger and looking for work.

Website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/youth-allowance>

### Youth Disability Supplement

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

Website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/youth-disability-supplement>

## 6. Employment Benefits and Services

### Australian Apprenticeships Incentives System

Australian Apprentices with disability and their employers may be eligible to receive additional assistance under the Australian Apprenticeships Incentives System. A range of assistance is available to support Australian Apprentices with disability, including Disabled Australian Apprentice Wage Support which is paid to employers, and assistance for tutorial, interpreter and mentor services for apprentices.

Phone: 133 873 (Australian Apprenticeships referral line).

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

Specific page on website:[**https://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/aus-apprenticeships-incentives**](https://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/aus-apprenticeships-incentives)

### Disability Employment Services (DES)

Disability Employment Services (DES) help people with disability find work and keep a job. Through Disability Employment Services, people with disability, injury or health condition may be able to receive assistance to prepare for, find and keep a job.

Providers of Disability Employment Services are called DES Providers. DES Providers are experienced in supporting people with disability, as well as providing assistance to employers to support employees with disability in the workplace.

Disability Employment Australia has a database of DES Providers.

Phone (03) 9012 6000

**Email:** info@disabilityemployment.org.au

Website: <https://disabilityemployment.org.au/>

Specific page on website: <https://disabilityemployment.org.au/provider-search/vic/>

### Employment Assistance Fund (EAF)

The Employment Assistance Fund (EAF) gives financial help to eligible people with disability and mental health conditions and employers to buy work related modifications, equipment, Auslan services and workplace assistance and support services. The EAF is available to eligible people with disability who are about to start a job, are self-employed or who are currently working. It is also available to people with disability who need Auslan assistance or special work equipment to look for and prepare for a job.

For further information about the EAF including eligibility, please contact your Employment Services Provider or Job Access.

Phone: 1800 464 800

Website: <https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/employment-assistance-fund-eaf>

### The Field - Jobs

Founded by 2022 Australian of the Year Dylan Alcott, the Field is a job site built by and for people with disability, that actively connects people with disability with jobs from inclusive employers. It has been created with accessibility and inclusivity at the core of every part of the process; from accessible design and development, to the implementation of unique features. The Field’s platform is more than simply connecting candidates with employers. Their solution is innovative, accessible, and trustworthy for people with disability. Hiring managers have been given a tool that removes barriers and equips them and their organisations to hire more inclusively, while unlocking incredible talent across all industries, roles, and levels of experience.

Website: <https://www.thefield.jobs/Job/Home>

Phone: (03) 9830 0190

Email: support@thefield.jobs

### Work Assist

Work Assist was previously the Job in Jeopardy program. It can help if you're at risk of losing your job due to illness, injury or disability. Work Assist is free. You can access it by registering with a Disability Employment Services (DES) provider.

Work Assist can help to:

* redesign your job so you can keep working
* change your workplace so you can continue to work
* get specialised equipment to help you do your job.

You may be eligible for Work Assist if all of the following apply. You:

* have worked an average of at least 8 hours a week over the last 13 weeks
* are at risk of losing your job because of your illness, injury or disability
* aren’t already getting assistance from a DES provider.

You can contact a DES provider for help with Work Assist. Go to the Job Access website to find your local DES provider at: <https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/>

Website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/>

Specific page on Website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/work-assist?context=22276>

## 7. Entertainment Benefits and Services

ACT Companion Card
The Companion Card is a credit-card sized photo ID card issued to people with a significant disability who require attendant care support from a companion to attend participating venues or activities without incurring the cost of a second ticket for their companion.

Contact the ACT Companion Card Program for further information and to obtain an application form.

Phone: (02) 6205 4333

**Email:**companioncard@act.gov.au

Website: <https://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/companion_card>

### 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 website. There you will find out about how to find an accessible cinema in your area and a guide on how to find accessible movie sessions on cinema websites.

Website: <https://www.mediaaccess.org.au/cinema-the-arts/access-to-cinema/at-the-cinema>

### 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: image containing the audio described logo ‘AD’:



Website: <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.

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

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

Audio description (AD) 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.

### Radio Reading Services

These services were formerly known as Radio for the Print Handicapped (RPH.) They use the medium of radio and the skills of volunteers to turn print into sound making printed and published information available for people who could not otherwise access it. Australia is unique in that its radio reading services are available to all as they are part of the mainstream radio service.

There are radio reading services in each of the State and Territory capital cities and in regional centres in Victoria, New South Wales, and Tasmania. Some community radio stations also offer a radio reading service as part of their programs. Radio reading services are available through your AM or FM radio, your smart speaker device, or your digital radio or via the internet.

For information on radio reading services throughout Australia visit <https://www.rph.org.au>

In Canberra tune to Radio 1RPH at 1125 on the AM band, on digital radio, by your google or Amazon Alexa smart speaker or by the listen live link on the Radio 1RPH website <https://www.radio1rph.org.au>

### 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.

Phone: (03) 9864 9600 (Existing Vision Australia Library clients)

Phone: 1300 847 466 (New library clients)

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

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, see below contacts.

Vision Australia: Phone: 1300 847 466

Bush Australia: Phone: (02) 9714 3434

Hills Tech Life: Phone: 1800 68 50 32

### Theatre and the Arts

**Canberra Theatre Centre**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 Centre offers:

* Tactile Tours
* Audio Described Performances
* Mobility Assistance
* Special Seating Requests

Phone: (02) 6275 2700

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

Specific page on website: <https://canberratheatrecentre.com.au/your-visit/access-special-assistance/>

#### **National Gallery of Australia (NGA)**

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 6411
Email: access@nga.gov.au

Website: <https://nga.gov.au/>

Specific page on website: <https://nga.gov.au/visit/>

**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.

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:

#### **Canberra and the ACT Disabled Travel**

Phone: (07) 3715 7348

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

#### **Cocky Guides**

Cocky Guides are a social enterprise that specialises in providing unique, multi-sensory adventures in small groups for the blind and low-vision community, as well as dedicated tours with an Auslan Interpreter for deaf travellers or those that sign. Their number one priority is to make sure their travellers feel comfortable, supported and included. Hundreds of Australians have experienced Cocky Guides engaging and accessible day trips, short breaks and road trips to more than 30 destinations across Australia.

Phone: 1300 657 640

Email: buck@cockyguides.com.au

Website: <https://www.cockyguides.com.au/>

**Traveleyes**

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

Phone: (02) 8006 1393

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

## 8. Aids and Equipment Benefits and Services

### 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@canberrablindsociety.org.au

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

### Eyes For Life Canberra

Eyes for Life Canberra (EFLC) provide support and services to people who have low vision by offering a range of services for people of all ages who are coming to terms with, or living with, a vision impairment.

EFLC offers a qualified Outreach Officer, Community Engagement Officer and Occupational Therapist who can together provide a Future Development Program to assist people who are vision impaired to develop their abilities and social skills as well as promote and maintain independence in their everyday lives. The Program includes: assessments and advice on home modifications, including advice on home appliances and other equipment best suited to the individual’s needs, and, advice on equipment and other strategies that break down the barriers for people pursuing education or employment options or other work such as volunteering, caring for others as well as participating in social and community activities.

Phone: (02) 6176 3470

Email: info@eflc.org.au

Website: <https://eflc.org.au/>

### Employment Assistance Fund (EAF)

The Employment Assistance Fund (EAF) gives financial help to eligible people with disability and mental health conditions and employers to buy work related modifications, equipment, Auslan services and workplace assistance and support services. The EAF is available to eligible people with disability who are about to start a job, are self-employed or who are currently working. It is also available to people with disability who need Auslan assistance or special work equipment to look for and prepare for a job.

For further information about the EAF including eligibility, please contact your Employment Services Provider or Job Access.

Phone: 1800 464 800

Website: <https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/employment-assistance-fund-eaf>

### Low Cost Personal Computers (PCs)

#### **Equipment Recycling Network Incorporated**

Equipment Recycling Network Incorporated is a self-funded, not-for-profit, registered charity, staffed entirely by volunteers, to support people with disabilities.

They sell refurbished desktop computers, guaranteed for three months, at a nominal cost, to people with a disability.

Phone: (03) 9879 5211

Email: erni@erni.asn.au

Website: <https://www.erni.asn.au/>

#### **WorkVentures**

WorkVentures is a not-for-profit organisation providing quality refurbished low cost Laptop and desktop computers. Computers are covered by warranty and come readily installed with Windows and Microsoft Office.

Phone: 1800 112 205

Email: info@workventures.com.au

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

Specific page on website: <https://workventures.com.au/low-cost-computers/>

### NVDA (Non-Visual Desktop Access)

NVDA is a free screen reader for Windows that provides computer access for people who are blind or vision impaired through synthetic speech. The software can run entirely from USB with no installation required and is also compatible with many refreshable Braille devices.

Phone: (07) 5667 8372

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

### TAD Australia Custom Designed Equipment Service

TAD Australia provides a unique service to provide innovative equipment solutions for people with a disability. Volunteers construct assistive devices that are not available on the mainstream market to meet the client’s particular needs. In some cases, a mainstream product is used and is modified to produce an accessible version. Assistive devices are used in all aspects of life, such as personal care, mobility, daily living, work, computing and recreation. The client is required to cover the cost of any materials required to produce their assistive device, in addition to a small fee for labour. If there is a task that you are having difficulty with due to your disability and you can’t find a solution on the market, contact TAD NSW.

Phone: (02) 9912 3400

Website: <https://tadaustralia.org.au/>

### Technology for Ageing and Disability ACT (TADACT)

With a team of volunteers whose skills range from engineering to sewing, and an occupational therapist on staff, TADACT is able to make a big difference in the lives of children and adults with disabilities, and older people with special needs. TADACT provides assistive equipment that solves the specific problems faced by the individual. Their work covers custom designed items, designed to suit needs that can’t be met through commercially available equipment.

TADACT provides assistive equipment for hospitals, schools, therapy providers and individual clients including NDIS and My Aged Care participants.

Phone: (02) 6287 4290

Website: <https://www.tadact.org.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 application requirements and upcoming bursary application dates.

Phone: 1300 847 4666

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

Work Assist
Work Assist was previously the Job in Jeopardy program. It can help if you're at risk of losing your job due to illness, injury or disability. Work Assist is free. You can access it by registering with a Disability Employment Services (DES) provider.

Work Assist can help to:

* redesign your job so you can keep working.
* change your workplace so you can continue to work.
* get specialised equipment to help you do your job.

You may be eligible for Work Assist if all of the following apply. You:

* have worked an average of at least 8 hours a week over the last 13 weeks
* are at risk of losing your job because of your illness, injury or disability
* aren’t already getting assistance from a DES provider.

You can contact a DES provider for help with Work Assist. Go yto the Job Access website to find your local DES provider at <https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/>

Website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/>

Specific page on Website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/work-assist?context=22276>

## 9. Financial Support administered by Services Australia

The following payments are administered by Services Australia (Centrelink). To find out more about a particular support payment, contact Services Australia.

Phone: 132 300

Website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/>

### Age Pension

The age pension is the main income support payment for people who have reached age pension age. To get this you must be all of the following:

* Age Pension age
* under the income and assets test limits
* an Australian resident, normally for at least 10 years.

If you’re legally blind and you’re not claiming Rent Assistance, you may be able to claim Age Pension without being assessed against the income and assets tests. You’ll need to provide an ophthalmologist report to support your claim.

Website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/age-pension>

### 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 pension number, you may also be entitled to subsidies for gas, water, electricity and a range of other services.

#### **Age Pension (blind) 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 September 2004 edition of BC News. The information was 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.

Specific page on website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/austudy>

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.

Specific page on website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/carer-allowance>

### 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.

Specific page on website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/carer-payment>

### Crisis Payment

The Crisis payment is a one-off payment that is available to assist people who are suffering severe financial hardship and experiencing difficult or extreme circumstances such as:

* domestic violence,
* arrived in Australia for the first time on humanitarian visa,
* recently released from prison or psychiatric confinement.

To be eligible for the Crisis payment, you must get, or be eligible for an income support payment or ABSTUDY Living allowance.

Website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/crisis-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 at the end of this document entitled “Age Pension vs. Disability Support Pension (blind)”.

### Education Entry Payment

If you are already receiving a payment such as the Disability Support Pension 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.

Specific page on website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/education-entry-payment>

### 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.

Specific page on website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/essential-medical-equipment-payment>

### Financial Information Service

Services Australia (Centrelink) operates the Financial Information Service which provides a free and confidential service that can inform and educate you about financial matters. The Financial Information Service can help you make informed decisions about your finances and help you plan for your future financial needs.

Specific page on website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/financial-information-service>

### JobSeeker Payment

JobSeeker Payment replaced Newstart in 2020. Jobseeker provides financial help if you’re between 22 and Age Pension age and looking for work. It’s also for when you’re sick or injured and can’t do your usual work or study for a short time. You must meet income and asset tests and residency rules to qualify for this payment.

Specific page on website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/jobseeker-payment>

### 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.

Specific page on website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/mobility-allowance>

### **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 Payment. The supplement aims to assist recipients with the cost of full or part-time study.

Specific page on website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/pensioner-education-supplement>

### 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.

Specific page on website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/rent-assistance>

### 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 Services Australia for further information.

Specific page on website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/telephone-allowance>

### 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 Services Australia for further information.

Specific page on website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/utilities-allowance>

### Youth Allowance

If you are 24 or younger and a student or Australian Apprentice, or 21 or younger and looking for work, you may be eligible for Youth Allowance.

Specific page on website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/youth-allowance>

### 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.

Specific page on website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/youth-disability-supplement>

## 10. Financial Support

The following payments are not administered by Services Australia (Centrelink).

### Australian Disability and Indigenous Peoples’ Education Fund

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

Phone: 0421 865 604

Email: info@adipef.org.au

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

### Australian Apprenticeships Incentives System

Australian Apprentices with disability and their employers may be eligible to receive additional assistance under the Australian Apprenticeships Incentives System. A range of assistance is available to support Australian Apprentices with disability, including Disabled Australian Apprentice Wage Support which is paid to employers, and assistance for tutorial, interpreter and mentor services for apprentices.

Phone: 133 873 (Australian Apprenticeships referral line).

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

Specific page on website:<https://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/aus-apprenticeships-incentives>

### Employment Assistance Fund (EAF)

The Employment Assistance Fund (EAF) gives financial help to eligible people with disability and mental health conditions and employers to buy work related modifications, equipment, Auslan services and workplace assistance and support services. The EAF is available to eligible people with disability who are about to start a job, are self-employed or who are currently working. It is also available to people with disability who need Auslan assistance or special work equipment to look for and prepare for a job.

For further information about the EAF including eligibility, please contact your Employment Services Provider or Job Access.

Phone: 1800 464 800

Website: <https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/employment-assistance-fund-eaf>

### 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 Disability Support Pension (blind) and aged between 18 and 65 years old, are exempt from paying the Medicare levy.

When you are over 65 years of age, the Disability Support Pension (blind) 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.

Specific page on website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/medicare-and-tax?context=60092>

To apply for the Medicare levy exemption or for more information, go the Australian Taxation Office website.

Specific page on website: <https://www.ato.gov.au/Individuals/Medicare-and-private-health-insurance/Medicare-levy/Medicare-levy-exemption/>

### No Interest Loans (NILS)

NILS are a smart loan option to help you manage your money, and you only pay back what you borrow, no interest and no charges.

Borrow up to $2,000 for essential goods and services including:

* Household items like appliances, whitegoods and furniture,
* Car repairs and registration
* Medical, dental, wellbeing and life event expenses
* Technology like a phone or laptop
* Education expenses like fees or uniforms
* Employment expenses like licenses or equipment

Borrow up to $3,000 for:

* Bond and rent in advance
* Rates
* Costs associated with a natural disaster

No Interest Loans are offered by more than 170 local community not-for-profit organisations in over 600 locations around Australia.

For eligibility criteria and to find a community services provider near you, visit the Good Shepherd website.

Website: <https://goodshep.org.au/services/nils/>

Phone: 13 64 57

## 11. Health Benefits and Services

### Allied Health Podiatry Service

This scheme is designed to increase access to podiatry services for people who may experience difficulty taking care of their feet, such as the frail aged or some people with a disability. The scheme allows the individual five free podiatry visits per year.

To find out more about this scheme and obtain a referral, speak to your general practitioner.

### Ambulance Fee Exemption

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.

Website: <https://esa.act.gov.au/>

Specific page on website: <https://esa.act.gov.au/about-esa-emergency-services/ambulance/fees-and-charges>

### Dental Services (Public)

Canberra Health Services offer a range of dental services to eligible adults and children at their Community Health Centres. These services are available at little or no cost to:

* all children under the age of 14 years who live in the ACT or attend an ACT school
* young people under the age of 18 with a Centrelink-issued Pension Concession or Health Care Card
* children who are under the care of the Canberra Health Services Cleft Palate Clinic
* adults who are ACT residents and are the primary holder of a Centrelink-issued Pension Concession or Health Care Card or a Veteran’s affairs card or an ACT Services Access card.

If you are eligible for this service, you can contact your nearest clinic to register on the waitlist.

Website: <https://www.canberrahealthservices.act.gov.au/>

Specific page on website: <https://www.canberrahealthservices.act.gov.au/services-and-clinics/dental-services>

### 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 Services Australia.

Phone: 132 300

Website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.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 general practitioner (GP) appointments at the discretion of the doctor. For further information on the Health

Care Card, contact Services Australia.

Phone: 132 300

Website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/>

Specific page on website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/health-care-card>

### Hearing Service

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 Department of Health and Aged Care.

Phone: 1800 500 726

Website: [https://hearingservices.gov.au/wps/portal/hso/site/HSOHome/!ut/p/z1/04\_Sj9CPykssy0xPLMnMz0vMAfIjo8zivQNNzQw9DYy8LcL83QwcHf1CfbzcTIwMvA30wwkpiAJKG-AAjiD9UWAluEwwMIUqwGNGQW6EQaajoiIAIh5E\_g!!/dz/d5/L2dBISEvZ0FBIS9nQSEh/](https://hearingservices.gov.au/wps/portal/hso/site/HSOHome/%21ut/p/z1/04_Sj9CPykssy0xPLMnMz0vMAfIjo8zivQNNzQw9DYy8LcL83QwcHf1CfbzcTIwMvA30wwkpiAJKG-AAjiD9UWAluEwwMIUqwGNGQW6EQaajoiIAIh5E_g%21%21/dz/d5/L2dBISEvZ0FBIS9nQSEh/)

### Personal Alarms

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

This service is provided by the Australian Red Cross for people in ACT who are senior/elderly or have a disability and are at risk of a sudden illness or fall that may go unnoticed.

The personal alarm service incorporates a small personal alarm button and an alarm unit. The button is lightweight, water resistant and can be worn as a pendant necklace or as a personal wrist alarm. It works anywhere around the home, even in the garden or shower.

The service is suitable for most people including those with speech, hearing or sight deficits and those with limited English.

Phone: (**02) 6234 7663**

**Website:** <https://www.redcross.org.au/services/personal-alarms/>

### 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 and Aged Care.

Phone: 1800 020 613

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

## 12. Housing Benefits and Services

### Council Rate Concessions

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 Pensioner Duty Concession Scheme

The Pensioner Duty Concession Scheme (PDCS) assists eligible pensioners who own a residential home, to move to accommodation more suited to their needs, for example moving from a house to a townhouse, by reducing the conveyance duty payable on their purchase of a residential home or residential vacant land. 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>

### Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP)

The Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) helps older Australians access entry-level support services to live independently and safely at home.

To make sure you can access the help you need at an affordable price, the government subsidises a variety of organisations across Australia. These organisations are called service providers. They deliver care and services to you at a subsidised price.

Eligibility for this program is based on your support needs and age. An aged care assessment will determine your eligibility for the CHSP, including specific services.

Some of the services available 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 CHSP service providers in the ACT go to: <https://www.myagedcare.gov.au/find-a-provider>

For more information about the CHSP and eligibility visit ‘my aged care’.

Website: <https://www.myagedcare.gov.au/>

Specific page on website: <https://www.myagedcare.gov.au/help-at-home/commonwealth-home-support-programme>

### Rental Bond help

The rental bond help is an interest-free loan from Housing ACT to help you enter the private rental market. The loan can cover up to the full cost of your rental bond. This money is paid directly to the ACT Revenue Office on your behalf.

To be eligible for rental bond help, you need to:

* be at least 16 years of age
* enter into a tenancy agreement in the ACT (and intend to reside in that residence for the duration of your tenancy)
* earn less than the income threshold
* hold less than $10,000 in cash or savings for a single applicant, or $15,000 for joint applicants.

You have up to 24 months to repay the loan. Once you've repaid your rental bond loan to Housing ACT, and your tenancy has ended, the bond is returned to you by the ACT Revenue Office.

Website: <https://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/>

Specific page on website: <https://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/housing/rental-bonds-and-other-help/rental-bond-help>

### Utilities Concession

If you hold a current Pensioner Concession card, Health Care card or Veteran’s Affairs Pensioner Concession card or Gold card, you may be eligible for a concession on your electricity and/or water and sewerage charges. For further information or to apply for the concession contact the ACT Revenue Office:

Phone: (02) 6207 0028

Website: <https://www.revenue.act.gov.au/community-assistance/utilities-concession>

## 13. Money Management

### Banknote Measures

If you have trouble differentiating between the notes in your wallet, you can obtain a “Banknote Measures” from Blind Citizens Australia free of charge. The Banknote Measures 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 (BCA)

Email: bca@bca.org.au

### Free Financial Counselling

Moneysmart financial counselling is a free and confidential service funded by the Australian Government and offered by not-for-profit community organisations. Financial counsellors are skilled professionals who provide advice and support to people struggling with bills and debt.

For a financial counsellor near you visit the Moneysmart website or call the national debt hotline.

National Debt Helpline Phone: 1800 007 007

Website: <https://moneysmart.gov.au/managing-debt/financial-counselling>

### LookTel Money Reader

LookTel Money Reader is an application that can be downloaded to your iPhone or other iOS device which instantly recognises currency and speaks the denomination, enabling people to quickly and easily identify and count bills. Point the camera of your iOS device at a bill and the application will tell you the denomination in real-time. The app does not require an internet connection, which means it will read money at any location. Twenty one currencies are supported.

LookTel Money Reader is available in the [iTunes App Store](http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/looktel-money-reader/id417476558?mt=8) and [Mac App Store](http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/looktel-money-reader/id477052345?ls=1&mt=12).

Website: <http://www.looktel.com/moneyreader>

### Talking Automatic Teller Machines (ATM)

Most of the major banks, such as the National Australia Bank, St George, Greater, 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.

## 14. 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. Phone numbers could not be provided for some sporting groups as they change frequently, so if you are unable to access the website, contact Blind Citizens Australia.

Phone: 1800 033 660

Email: bca@bca.org.au

### Cricket

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

Website: <https://www.blindcricket.org.au/>

### Fitability Tandem Cycling (Canberra Region)

The Fitability 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.

Fitability has a number of tandem bikes, both road and recreational style, for the use of participant cyclists.

Phone: (02) 6248 7995

Email: fitability.act@gmail.com

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

### Goalball

Goalball is a unique sport, designed exclusively for people who are blind or vision impaired. Goalball is a Paralympic sport. It is played on an indoor court with three players on each team. The object of the game is to roll the ball to the other end of the court past your opponents and into their goal. The ball has bells to make it easier for players to track its movement and all players are blindfolded to allow for varying levels of vision amongst players.

For more information on social events, competitions and how to get involved contact Blind Sports Australia:

Website: <https://www.blindsportsaustralia.com.au/goalball-sport>

### 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

Address: 119 Drake Brockman Drive, Holt ACT 2615

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

### Sailing

Sailability aims to encourage and facilitate sailing and boating for people with a disability. Most Sailability clubs already have experience working with people who are blind or vision impaired and assisted them in developing their sailing skills, whether it is for competition or simply recreation.
Phone: (02) 6273 4777

Postal Address: PO Box 7169, Yarralumla ACT 2600
Address: Canberra Yacht Club, 1 Mariner Place, Yarralumla ACT 2600

Website: <https://canberrayc.com/sailability2.php>

Website: <http://www.sailability.org/au/act/>

## 15. Telecommunications Benefits and Services

### Phone Bills in Alternate Format

Some telecommunications providers such as Optus and Telstra provide phone bills in alternate formats.

* If you are with Telstra and would like to receive your bills in large print or Braille, phone 1800 068 424.
* If you are with Optus and would like to receive your bills in Braille, phone 13 30 66.
* If you are with another provider, contact them to enquire about bills in other formats.

### Telstra’s Directory Assistance Helpline

Telstra operates a free directory assistance helpline for people who are unable to read or access a standard telephone directory. This is a live, operator-assisted service that includes both phone number information and address information. You will be given the phone number to take down but will not be connected to the number.

To apply for this free service contact Telstra’s Disability Enquiry Hotline.

Phone: 1800 068 424

### Telstra Call Connect Fee Exemption

Unlike Telstra’s Directory Assistance service, Call Connect will connect you to the number that you wish to dial. A service fee is usually charged for Call Connect calls, however eligible customers may be granted a fee exemption. Exemptions are only granted to customers who experience difficulty with dialling numbers on a standard telephone handset. To obtain an application form for a fee exemption contact Telstra’s Disability Enquiry Hotline.

Phone: 1800 068 424

## 16. Transport Benefits and Services

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 ACT 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

For an assessment and to register to use this service, contact your Regional Community Service. They can provide you with details on how to make a booking, any associated costs and answer any further questions you may have. Contact details for your Regional Community Service can be found on the ACT Government Community Services website.

Website: <https://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/community/community_bus_services>

### 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. For further information or to obtain an application form, contact the ACT Revenue Office.

Phone: (02) 6207 0028 select option 5
Email: concessions@act.gov.au

Website: <https://www.revenue.act.gov.au/community-assistance/taxi-subsidy-scheme>

### Airport Meet and Assist Services

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

Community Minibus Service
This community minibus service provides an ACT wide, door to door community transport service to maximise client independence and to support their community access needs.

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 ACT 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.

Community minibus services are provided between 7:00am and 5:00pm, Monday to Friday. Bookings are essential for all transport services. For further information about eligibility, service and booking, contact the community minibus service.

Phone: (02) 6126 9090 or (02) 6293 6500
Website: <https://commsatwork.org/community-transport>

### Great Southern Rail Service Concession

Great Southern Railway operates the Indian Pacific, the Overlander and the Ghan long distance rail services that provide transport between Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney. There are generous concessions available for all of these services. For prices, phone Great Southern Railway and indicate that you are blind or vision impaired.

Phone: 1800 703 357

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

###  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 Services Australia.

Phone: 132 717

Website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/>

Specific page on website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/mobility-allowance>

### Mobility Disability Parking Permit

The Australian disability parking permit, also known as the mobility 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.

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.

Access Canberra is the administering authority for the 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.

Applications for an Australian disability parking permit must be assessed by a legally qualified medical practitioner or specialist eye doctor. However, a person who holds a Centrelink disability pension card, endorsed as 'Blind' is not required to be examined by a doctor, however the person's Centrelink disability pension card must be provided on application.

Phone: 13 22 81

Website: <https://www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au/s/article/parking-permits-tab-australian-disability-parking-permit>

### Qantas Carer Concession Card

The Carer Concession Card is issued to people with a disability who require the assistance of a carer while travelling. Anyone who requires 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. For more information, contact PWDA-People With Disability Australia.

Phone: 1800 422 015

Website: <https://pwd.org.au/services/qantas-carer-concession-card/>

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

The RTPIS, known as NXTBUS, tracks ACTION buses and provides 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: <https://www.transport.act.gov.au/?a=879764>

### Vision Impaired Person’s 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 to eligible recipients by MyWay Administration Office,.

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

## 17. Utility Benefits and Services

### ACT Water and Sewerage Pension Rebate

If you hold a current Pensioner Concession card, Health Care card or Veteran’s Affairs Pensioner Concession card or Gold card, you may be eligible for a concession on your electricity and/or water and sewerage charges. For further information or to apply for the concession contact the ACT Revenue Office:

Phone: (02) 6207 0028

Website: <https://www.revenue.act.gov.au/community-assistance/utilities-concession>

### Bills in Alternate Format

Some energy and water providers are able to provide bills in a range of different formats; including email, large print and hardcopy Braille. Speak to your provider to see if they offer this service and, if not, ask them if they would be willing to put measures in place so that they are able to accommodate your needs.

### 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>

Specific page on website: <https://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/>

Energy Concession ACT & NSWIf 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.
One concession only will be allowed in respect of an account for each billing period.

Phone: 13 14 93

Website: <https://www.actewagl.com.au/support-and-advice/concessions-and-rebates/concessions>

## 18. 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
* Large print products

All domestic letters weighing under 500g and domestic parcels weighing under 22kg 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 use of the Blind” clearly printed on the packaging. For further information, contact Australia Post.

Phone: 13 7678

Website: <https://auspost.com.au/sending/check-sending-guidelines/mail-for-the-blind>

### 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: <https://auspost.com.au/sending/stamps/concession-stamps>

### 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: <https://auspost.com.au/id-and-document-services/apply-for-a-keypass-id>

Proof of Identity Card
To obtain a Proof of Identity 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 Access Canberra location and must provide original copies of both proof of identity and age, and proof of residency.

Phone: 13 22 81
Website: <https://www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au/s/article/proof-of-identity-cards-tab-overview>