# Blind Citizens Australia logo

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# New South Wales Toolkit

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## Blind Citizens Australia logo

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## 1. Introduction

### Welcome to Blind Citizens Australia New South Wales 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](mailto:bca@bca.org.au)

## 2. Advocacy and Legal Support

### 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.

Phone: 1800 228 333

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

### 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.

Phone: 1800 800 708

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

### Community Legal Centres

Community Legal Centres offer a range of legal and related services to their client community, including information and referral, legal advice, case work, advocacy and legal representation. To locate your nearest Community Legal Centre contact Community Legal Centres NSW.

Phone: (02) 9212 733

Website: [www.clcnsw.org.au](http://www.clcnsw.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>

### 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/>

### Law Access NSW

Law Access NSW operates a free telephone service which provides legal information, referral and in some cases, legal advice.

Phone: 1300 888 529

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

### NSW Anti-Discrimination Board

The Anti-Discrimination Board can investigate and work towards resolving breaches of the NSW Anti-Discrimination Act.

Phone: (02) 9268 5544

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

### **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: <https://www.oaic.gov.au/freedom-of-information>

### Public Interest Advocacy Centre

The Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC) can provide legal advice and representation on issues which have a public interest; particularly where a decision or practice negatively impacts on a number of people who are subject to economic disadvantage.

Phone: (02) 8898 6500

Website: [www.piac.asn.au](http://www.piac.asn.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/>

## 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](mailto: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](mailto:bca@bca.org.au)

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

BCA has a number of branches around Australia including five branches within NSW. The current NSW branches are: Sydney branch, Casino Richmond Valley branch, Central West NSW branch, Newcastle-Hunter branch, and Tweed Valley branch.  
For more information about any of the NSW branches, please contact the applicable Branch Coordinator. The contact details for the Branch Coordinators can be found on BCA’s website at: <https://www.bca.org.au/branches/new-south-wales/>

### DeafNav-Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (RIDBC)

The Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (RIDBC) provides quality and innovative education and other services to achieve the best outcomes for current and future generations with hearing and/or vision loss throughout Australia.

Phone: 1300 581 391

Website: <https://deafnav.com.au/services/ridbc-north-rocks>

### **Deafblind Australia**

Deafblind Australia represent and advocate for people with deafblindness to work to improve supports and services in Australia.

Website: <https://www.deafblind.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 436 364

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

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

### 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](mailto: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](mailto:info@visionaustralia.org)

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

## 4. Disability Care and Support Schemes

### 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/>

### 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 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](mailto: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](mailto: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

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 enrol in and ask to speak to a Disability Liaison Officer or Teacher Consultant for Vision Impairment.

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 pack 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>

### TAFE NSW Fee Exemption

Students receiving a Disability Support Pension through Services Australia (Centrelink or Veterans' Affairs), or who are a client of a Teacher/Consultant for Students with a Disability are eligible to receive a full fee exemption for one TAFE NSW course per year. They are also eligible for the concession fee for subsequent enrolments in that year.

Apprentices are required to pay a capped fee per year for their course.

Website: [www.tafensw.edu.au/enrol/fees](http://www.tafensw.edu.au/enrol/fees)

### 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>

### 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](mailto: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](mailto: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

### 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.

### NSW Companion Card

The NSW Companion Card is also available to assist people to access ticketed events – including movies, live performances and concerts. The Companion Card Scheme recognises 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.

If you hold a NSW Companion Card and have specific seating requirements, such as needing to sit nearer to the front of the stage if you still have some remaining vision, or needing a seat which does not require you to negotiate stairs if you have additional mobility difficulties, you may be able to purchase your concert or theatre tickets the day before they go on sale to ensure that you get a suitable seat. Arrangements differ between booking agents and venues, so the best thing to do is make enquiries to discuss your requirements prior to tickets going on sale.

Phone: 1800 893 044   
Website: [www.nswcompanioncard.org.au](http://www.nswcompanioncard.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

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. In NSW, this service currently operates in Sydney only, to find out more, contact Vision Australia.

Phone: 1300 847 466

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

Additionally, cassettes, CD’s or MP3s providing narrative description of visual information can be accessed at many attractions around NSW.

The following venues offer audio described tours:

* Australian Museum
* Art Gallery of NSW
* Cremorne Point Reserve on Sydney Harbour
* Museum of Contemporary Art
* Powerhouse Museum

### Travel Tours

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

#### **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](mailto: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

### Aids and Equipment Program

The Aids and Equipment Program (also known as PADP) is funded by the NSW Department of Health and aims to subsidise the cost of equipment for people with a disability. The program funds aids such as Braillers, talking diaries, CC TVs and other adaptive technology.

Children and adults with a permanent disability are able to apply for funding through the Aids and Equipment Program. In the event that funding is granted, the recipient will be asked to pay a $100 co-contribution (or up to 20% of the total price for higher income earners). To be considered for this program you will need to obtain a referral from a medical practitioner and a prescription for the intended aid or piece of equipment from an occupational therapist.

Phone:1800 362 253

Website: [www.enable.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.enable.health.nsw.gov.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](mailto: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](mailto: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/>

### 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

All of the 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>

**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](mailto: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

## 10. 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

Holders of a Centrelink Pension Concession Card are entitled to free ambulance services within the state of New South Wales. If ambulance transport requires you to travel interstate, contact the relevant state ambulance service to discuss arrangements for concession card holders.

Website: <https://www.ambulance.nsw.gov.au/>

Specific page on website: <https://www.ambulance.nsw.gov.au/our-services/accounts-and-fees/exemptions-from-nsw-ambulance-fees>

### 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/>

### Oral Health Care

Funded by NSW Government Area Health Services, eligible concession card holders are entitled to limited free oral health services. To find out more about free oral health care services for concession holders, contact your local hospital or public dental clinic.

### 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>

## 11. Housing Benefits and Services

### Council Rate Concessions

Pension holders who own and occupy land are eligible for a concession on council rates and charges. If the land is owned by a number of people, a proportion of the concession may still be granted.

Some Council’s may also grant deferment of rates; whereby rates accrue against the property and do not have to be paid until the property is sold or transferred. Please contact your Local Council for more information.

### 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 NSW 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>

### Home and Community Care

This program provides basic maintenance and support services to the frail-aged and people with a disability to continue to live independently. Some of the services that can be provided include:

* Home modification and maintenance
* Nursing and allied health care
* Meal preparation and food care
* Domestic assistance
* Transport
* Respite
* Counselling and assessment

To find out more about the Home and Community Care program and how you can apply, contact Ageing, Disability and Homecare (ADHC) in the Department of Communities and Justice.

Phone: (02) 8270 2000

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

### Housing NSW Home Modifications

Public housing residents who have identified a need for modifications to be made to the home can have modifications made free of charge where it is economically viable for Housing NSW to accommodate them. Modifications can greatly assist an individual to remain living independently and may include items such as handrails. Where it is not appropriate for modifications to be made to the home that the tenant resides in, they may be relocated to a suitable property. To find out more about home modifications, contact Department of Communities and Justice.

Phone: 1800 152 152

Website: <https://www.dcj.nsw.gov.au/housing.html>

## 12. 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](mailto: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 iPod Touch 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. 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.

### No Interest Loans Scheme

The No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS) exists to help individuals purchase or replace essential household items. The Scheme provides loans up to $2000 for the purchase of white goods, medical devices, furniture or any other essential household items.

Phone: 13 64 57

Website: <https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/find-a-no-interest-loans-scheme-nils-provider>

## 13. 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 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](mailto:bca@bca.org.au)

### Bowling

A game of blind bowls is very similar to the standard game. Each blind bowler has their own director to verbally explain distance, ball position etc. There are four different vision categories, so this game is not just for people who are totally blind. Blind Bowls is run by Bowls NSW.

Phone: 1800 932 695

Website: <https://bowlsnsw.com.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: [www.blindcricket.com](http://www.blindcricket.com)

### Golf

In a game of blind golf, players strike the ball in the same way as sighted players. The most fundamental role is played by the blind golfer’s caddie who acts as the golfer’s eyes and describes distances, directions and other visual elements of the game. There are three different vision categories, so this game is not just for people who are totally blind.

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

### Goal Ball

Goal Ball is a highly competitive sport for people who are blind which is played on an indoor court. There are three players on each team and the object of the game is to roll the ball past the other team without them stopping it. 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.

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

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

### Horse Riding

Riding for the Disabled (RDA) aims to give people with a disability the opportunity to enjoy all of the benefits associated with horse riding. Horse riding can be both recreational and therapeutic and this organisation has a great deal of experience working with people who are blind or vision impaired.

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

### Karate

Although many people who are blind or vision impaired, have successfully completed training in mainstream martial arts, Strathfield Seido Karate Dojo offers specialised classes for students who are blind or vision impaired. Once students become confident in the specialised class and understand the basic martial arts concepts and moves, they are free to join in with the other mainstream classes offered at the dojo.

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

### Sailing

With a large number of clubs throughout NSW, 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.

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

### Surfing

With several clubs on the South Coast of NSW, The Disabled Surfers’ Association provides opportunities for social events, friendship and competition for anyone with a disability who wants to give surfing a go. The association has never had a person with any disability that they have not been able to help to enjoy surfing.

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

### Swish

Swish is a game for people who are blind or vision impaired that is played on a modified table tennis table. The table has a high centre-board that the ball can move underneath and side barriers that prevent the ball from going off the side of the table. The ball that is used in swish is larger than a table tennis ball and has bells inside it so that players who are blind or vision impaired are able to track it when it is moving. The ball is rolled along the table, often at great speed, with the aim of rolling it off the opponent’s end of the table. Players use a small paddle to defend their end of the table.

There is no formal swish club in NSW, but several offices of Vision Australia have a swish table and regularly allow clients to come along and enjoy a game. You can contact your local office of Vision Australia to see if they have a table available.   
Phone: 1300 84 74 66

## 14. 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

## 15. Transport Benefits and Services

### 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 Transport

Community transport assists people with a disability and their carers for whom conventional public transport systems may not be an appropriate option. Community transport may provide transport for individuals with a disability for any of the following purposes:

* Recreation
* Shopping
* Medical care
* Social services

There are a number of Community transport providers throughout New South Wales and either individual or group transport may be available.

To find out more about the Community transport options available in your area, contact your local council or phone Transport for New South Wales.

Phone: (02) 8836 3100

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

### 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)

### Home and Community Care (HACC)

The HACC program provides basic maintenance and support services to the frail-aged and people with a disability. HACC provides a range of different supports, including transport assistance. To find out more about the Home and Community Care program, contact the Department of Communities and Justice.

Phone: (02) 8270 2000

Website: <https://www.dcj.nsw.gov.au/>

### Isolated Patients Transport and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS)

IPTAAS is a non-means tested scheme that provides financial assistance to people who are required to travel long distances to access specialist medical care. To be eligible for the scheme, you need to travel at least 100 km one way, or a cumulative distance of at least 200 km from your place of residence to get to the nearest available medical specialist. To find out more, contact your local IPTAAS office or ask your general practitioner about the scheme.

Website: [www.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.health.nsw.gov.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: 132 300

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

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

### Mobility Parking Permit

The Mobility Parking Permit is granted to eligible recipients with mobility difficulties and entitles a person to the following:

* Full access to accessible parking spaces marked with a symbol for persons with a disability.
* Free parking in metered, ticketed or coupon areas.
* Ability to park for an unlimited length of time when there is a sign indicating parking for more than 30 minutes.
* Ability to park for a maximum of two hours in spaces that are time restricted to 30 minutes.
* Ability to park for 30 minutes in spaces that are time restricted to less than 30 minutes.
* Ability to park for five minutes in spaces that are marked as

“No Parking” (driver must remain within three metres of the vehicle at all times).

To apply for a mobility parking permit, you will need to obtain an application form from your local Roads and Maritime Services Office or download a copy of the form from <https://roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au/>

This form will need to be completed and returned to Roads and Maritime Services (previously known as the RTA) along with a statement from your medical practitioner, a current photograph and proof of identity.

### 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/>

### Taxi Transport Subsidies Scheme (TTSS)

This scheme is designed to alleviate the cost of transport for people who are unable to drive due to significant and permanent disability. The applicant is issued with booklets of vouchers which enable the holder to travel by taxi at half fair, with a maximum subsidy of $60 per trip.

Phone: 1800 623 724

Website: <https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/>

### Tools for transport

You can access transport information such as timetables and status updates or plan a journey using the Transport for NSW info service.  
Phone: 131 500   
Website: [www.transportnsw.info](http://www.transportnsw.info)

App: visit the app store on your smart device to install and use the Transport Info app

There are also a range of other smart phone applications available that can provide timetable information and/or track your bus or train journey in real time. Not all of these applications have been tested to ensure that they are accessible, however in the event that an app is not accessible, please feel free to contact Blind Citizens Australia to discuss how this matter can be taken further.

#### Arrivo Sydney

Real-time Bus departure and location information for Sydney Buses and Train location information for Sydney and NSW Trains. You can also see the location of nearby bus ticket sellers and tag trips to receive automatic alerts when you are near your stop.

#### TransitTimes+

TransitTimes+ provides you with a trip planner, offline timetables, service alerts, and wheelchair accessibility information. You can download timetables for over 70 cities in Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Canada. Includes real-time bus information for Newcastle buses (STA) and Busways Blacktown services.

#### Triptastic

Triptastic lets you see at a glance where you can go from your current location and the next available services to take you there. You can also explore interactive detailed maps for routes, stops and service frequencies.

#### TripView Sydney

TripView is a smart phone application that displays Sydney Train/Bus/Ferry timetable data on your phone. It features a summary view showing your next services, as well as a full timetable viewer. All timetable data is stored on your phone, so it can be used offline. This application was fully accessible with VoiceOver when this information was last updated. To download the app now, visit the App store on your smart device.

### Vision Impaired Person’s Pass

This pass entitles the pass-holder to free transport on CityRail services, regular bus routes (government and private) and Sydney and Newcastle ferry services. Some private ferry services may also be covered depending on the operator. Additionally, pass holders are entitled to one free CountryLink service per calendar year and a half fair subsidy on long distance rail services within NSW.

To obtain an application form, contact the Transport for NSW Passes and Concessions Office.

Phone: 1300 548 828

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

## 16. Utility Benefits and Services

### 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.

### Energy Accounts Payment Assistance Scheme

Assistance is available for financially disadvantaged individuals who are experiencing difficulty paying their electricity bill due to crisis, through the Energy Accounts Payments Assistance Scheme (EAPA). Payments are not ongoing and assistance provided will be dependent on an assessment of needs by a charitable organisation. To find out about the scheme, contact the Energy Information Line.

Phone: 1300 136 888

Website: <https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/energy-accounts-payment-assistance-eapa-scheme>

### Energy Bill Concessions

The New South Wales Government provides an energy concession to holders of a Centrelink Pensioner Concession Card. This concession is granted to individuals who have energy supplied for domestic use only at their primary place of residence. Although it is paid through electricity bills, it does cover other forms of energy. Please contact your energy provider for more information.

### Smoke Alarm and Battery Replacement

The NSW Fire Service urges anyone who is unable to change the batteries in their smoke alarm to contact their nearest fire station on an annual basis to receive assistance free of charge. If your smoke alarm starts to emit a chirping sound, this indicates that the battery level is low and you should contact your nearest fire station immediately to have it replaced.

If your smoke alarm needs to be replaced, you will need to provide the battery-operated smoke alarm for installation by the fire fighter. If requesting a replacement battery for an existing smoke alarm, you will be required to provide the battery.

### Water Bill Rebate

Some concession card holders may be eligible for a rebate on their water bills. If you are experiencing financial hardship, other arrangements such as extended payment periods or hardship vouchers may be provided. Contact your local water authority for more information.

## 17. 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: <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>

### Free Photo Identification

The NSW Photo ID Card, issued by Roads and Maritime Services is a voluntary card for people who do not hold a current NSW driver licence. It may be used to help access a number of everyday services such as sending or receiving international mail, opening bank accounts and entering licensed premises. While there is usually an administration fee associated with this card, cards are issued to eligible pensioners free of charge. To find out more about the NSW Photo Card or to obtain an application, visit your nearest Roads and Maritime Services registry.

Website: <https://roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au/>