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# Victorian Toolkit

Revised February 2023

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## Introduction

Welcome to the Victorian Blind Citizens Australia Toolkit.

Navigating the disability service system can be a complex and frustrating process. Through our work, it has become clear that service providers and professionals who diagnose vision loss do not always provide their clients with appropriate information and referrals and as a result, many people simply don’t know about the range of options that exist to enable them to have greater choice and control over their lives. This is where our Blind Citizens toolkits come in!

If you feel like the information you have received does not adequately meet your needs as a person who is blind or vision impaired, the friendly staff at Blind Citizens Australia are always here to assist you. And if you are new to blindness or vision loss, Blind Citizens Australia can link you in with peer support opportunities that will enable you to talk to other people who are blind or vision impaired about the services and supports they are receiving.

We have produced a separate toolkit for each Australian state and territory to provide comprehensive and easy to understand information about the range of benefits, concessions and services that are available to people who are blind or vision impaired. These toolkits will be especially useful for individuals who are new to vision loss or have just moved interstate. Because the disability service system is constantly evolving though, even those individuals who have been blind or vision impaired for a longer period of time will find the information contained in these toolkits relevant and useful.

You can obtain a copy of any of our Blind Citizens Toolkits in your preferred format by contacting our office on the details below:

Blind Citizens Australia

Phone: 1800 033 660

Email: bca@bca.org.au

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

### Disclaimer

The content in this toolkit has been developed to reflect the benefits, entitlements and services available to people who are blind and vision impaired. All content is of a general nature and for personal use only. Although every effort has been made to verify the accuracy and currency of the information contained within this document at the time of publication, details may be subject to change without notice.

If you would like to provide comment on the content of this toolkit, please contact our Office.

## 1. 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/>

In Victoria, there are currently three organisations that have been funded to provide Local Area Coordination services – these are The Brotherhood of St Laurence, Latrobe Community Health Service and Intereach. Contact details for all three organisations have been provided below –

#### Brotherhood of St Laurence

Description: In North East Metropolitan Melbourne, Hume Moreland, Bayside Peninsula, Western Melbourne and Brimbank Melton areas the Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL):

* Supports people with disability to access community and mainstream services and resources.
* Supports people on the National Disability Insurance Scheme to navigate and engage effectively with the NDIS, including meeting with participants to develop their NDIS Plans.
* Provides information on assisting mainstream and community services to be more inclusive and supportive of people with disability.
* Promotes opportunities for people with disability.

Phone: 1300 275 634

Email: ndis.info@bsl.org.au

Direct link to NDIS information: <https://ndis.bsl.org.au/>

#### Intereach

Description: Intereach provides Local Area Coordination and Early Childhood Early Intervention services across the Loddon, Murrumbidgee, Mallee and Goulburn areas. We link people with disability, their families and carers to the NDIS, provide information, help them exercise choice and control over their supports and work to make the community more inclusive for people with disability.

Phone: 1300 488 226

Email: send an online enquiry at <https://www.intereach.com.au/contact/>

Direct link to NDIS information: <https://www.intereach.com.au/service/people-with-disability/>

#### Latrobe Community Health

Description: At Latrobe Community Health Service, we are proud to provide planning and community connection services as a partner with the National Disability Insurance Agency.

We work to connect people living with a disability to informal and natural supports that are already available in the community. We provide assistance with the planning process, and ensuring plans are implemented effectively.

Phone: 1800 242 696

Direct link to NDIS information: <https://www.lchs.com.au/services/national-disability-insurance-scheme/>

### 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/>

### Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH)

Description: We develop and deliver policies, programs and services that support and enhance the health and wellbeing of all Victorians. We assist those in our community who are most in need through housing, disability and children, youth and family services.

Phone: 1300475170

Website: <https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/>

### National Injury Insurance Scheme (NIIS)

Available in Queensland and rolling out in other states the NIIS is a no-fault scheme that provides life time 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>

## 2. Organisations of and/or 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

Email: info@ableaustralia.org.au

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

### Albinism Fellowship of Australia

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: <https://www.bca.org.au/>

### Blind Sports and Recreation Victoria (BSRV)

Blind Sports and Recreation Victoria offers over 20 fun, social sport and recreation programs for those who are blind or have low vision - all ages and fitness levels

We support you to get active and take part in the sport or recreation activity of your choice with other adults, teens or kids who are blind or vision impaired. Improve your health and well-being, while having fun.

BSRV works closely with Victorian State and Local Governments, State Sporting Associations, Disability Organisations and Community Organisations to improve and increase the number of opportunities available for blind and vision impaired people to participate in sport and active recreation.

Phone: (03) 9822 8876

Email: info@blindsports.org.au

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

### Braille House (QBWA)

Braille House is a FREE national Braille and Moon lending library. Braille house also runs regular braille classes and provides a transcription service.

Phone: 0738485257

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

### 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 Victoria

Learn to move confidently through the world with Orientation & Mobility travel training, maximise your remaining vision, master daily living skills with Occupational Therapists, or train and partner with a Guide Dog.

Phone: 1800 804 805

Email: info@guidedogsvictoria.com.au

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

### Macular Disease Foundation

Macular Disease Foundation Australia is committed to providing people with a macular disease, their family and carers, with access to relevant support and support services. The Foundation also supports health care professionals with information and resources to help them support their patients. Programs are directed towards education, awareness, early detection and treatments, support services and representation.

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

### NextSense

At NextSense, we believe that everyone should have the power to reach their potential. That’s why we’ve been supporting people with hearing and vision loss for over 160 years. NextSense operates Australia-wide.

Phone: 1300581391

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: 1800999870 or (03) 96505088

Email: info@retinaaustralia.com.au

Website: <https://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.

Phone: 1300847466

Email: info@visionaustralia.org

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

To find your nearest Vision Australia location: <https://www.visionaustralia.org/about-us/contact-us/vic>

## 3. Income Support and Financial Assistance

### Age Pension

The age pension is the main income support payment for people who have reached age pension age. There is eligibility criteria. However, the income test is not used if you are permanently blind and receive Age Pension unless you receive Rent Assistance.

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

### Austudy

Financial help for full time students and Australian Apprentices, 25 years or older. Must be studying an approved course and be under income and asset test limits.

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

### Carer Allowance

For people who give additional daily care to someone with a disability or medical condition, or an adult who is frail aged. There is an income test associated with this allowance.

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

### Carer Payment

A payment if you give constant care to someone who has a severe disability, illness, or an adult who is frail aged. You and the person you are caring for must both be Australian residents. You will also need to meet pension income and assets test limits.

Website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/carer-payment>

### Concessions and Benefits (Victorian Government)

A range of concessions are available to Victorians who are on low incomes or experiencing hardship and need help meeting the cost of living. There are a wide range of concessions and benefits available and each has their own eligibility requirements.

Website: <https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/about-concessions>

### 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, arrival in Australia for the first time on humanitarian visa or recently released from prison or psychiatric confinement.

Website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/crisis-payment>

### Disability Support Pension Blind

The Disability Support Pension provides financial support if you have a permanent physical, intellectual or psychiatric condition that stops you from working. It is subject to income and asset tests. The Disability Support Pension Blind is similar to regular DSP except that it is not income or assets tested unless you’re claiming Rent Assistance, or your partner claims an income support payment. You will need to provide specific documentation to begin claiming DSP Blind.

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

### Education Entry Payment

A once a year payment made when you start an approved education course and you receive certain income support.

Website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/education-entry-payment>

### Essential Medical Equipment Payment

A yearly payment to help with energy costs to run essential medical equipment or heating or cooling used for medical needs.

Website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/essential-medical-equipment-payment>

### Financial Information Service

A free service that can inform and educate you about financial matters.

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.

Website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/jobseeker-payment>

### Mobility Allowance

A payment to help with travel costs for work, study or looking for work if you have a disability, illness or injury that means you can’t use public transport. You must be over 16 years of age to receive this payment and have a need to travel for study, work, training or to look for work.

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

### No Interest Loans (NILS)

No Interest Loans (NILs) are a smart loan option to help you manage your money. Borrow up to $2,000 for essential goods and services with no fees, no interest, and no charges, EVER. You pay back only what you borrow and nothing more.

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

### Payment and Service Finder

An online tool to see what payments and services you may be eligible for.

Website: <https://www.centrelink.gov.au/custsite_pfe/pymtfinderest/paymentFinderEstimatorPage.jsf?wec-appid=pymtfinderest&wec-locale=en_US?#stay>

### Pensioner Education Supplement (PES)

A regular extra payment to help with study costs if you get certain income support.

Website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/pensioner-education-supplement>

### Rent Assistance

A regular extra payment if you pay rent and get certain payments from Centrelink.

Website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/rent-assistance>

### Telephone Allowance

A quarterly payment to help with phone and internet costs if you get certain payments from Centrelink.

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

### Utilities Allowance

A quarterly payment to help with household bills if you get certain payments from Centrelink.

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

### 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>

## 4. Money management

### Identifying Cash

Blind Citizens Australia offers several resources and fact sheets to help you identify various notes and coins. This includes “Cash Test” note identification cards, apps and how to understand tactile markings on notes and coins.

Contact: 1800 033 660

### Audio Aided Automatic Teller Machines (ATM)

Audio Aided ATM’s utilize special keys with Pips (raised round dots) and voice over technology to assist the vision impaired to complete a transaction. The service is accessed via a headphone jack which needs to be supplied by the user.

Contact BCA: 1800 033 660

## 5. Aids and Equipment

Important note:

If you have an individually funded package of supports under the National Disability Insurance Scheme or My Aged Care, you should talk to your planner or case manager about the aids or equipment you need to see if they can be funded as part of your support package.

### Aira

Aira is a live, human-to-human professional assistance service, an accommodation or productivity tool, that enhances independence by delivering on-demand, skilled and reliable visual interpreting for just about any task.

Website: <https://aira.io/>

### 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.

Contact: https://www.nvaccess.org/contact-us/

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

### Job Access

Access for People with Disability provides disability employment supports including government financial and other supports for workplace modifications. It provides support for finding jobs, workplace environment, job tailoring and skills regarding disability disclosure.

Phone: 1800 464 800

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

### Low Cost PCs

Equipment Recycling Network Inc.

Offers cheap, secondhand PCs, to people with disabilities.

Phone: (03) 9879 5211

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

### WorkVentures

WorkVentures provides low cost refurbished computers. They also offer traineeships for people looking to gain IT and Business Administration Skills.

Phone: 1800 112 205

Website: <https://workventures.com.au/im-an-individual/>

### See Through My Eyes

STME offers Scholarships towards tuition costs, adaptive technology bursaries, Careers Counselling, Workplace Information sessions and advocacy.

Website: <http://seethroughmyeyes.org.au/>

### TAD Custom Designed Equipment Service

TAD Disability Services provides personalized equipment, technology and services. Examples for VI / Blind might include modifying household equipment to make it tactile, or anything else that requires innovation and skill to meet a disability need. If you want it and it doesn’t exist call them.

Phone: 1300 663 243

Website: <https://solve-tad.org.au/about/>

### Victorian State-wide Equipment Program (SWEP)

SWEP provides Victorian people who either have a permanent or long-term disability or are frail aged with subsidised aids, equipment and home and vehicle modifications to enhance their independence and facilitate community participation.

Phone: 1300 747 937

Website: <https://swep.bhs.org.au/>

### Vision Australia Further Education Bursary

The bursaries provide adaptive technology to help blind and Vision Impaired students fully participate and succeed in their chosen tertiary studies.

Phone: 1300 847 466

Website: <https://www.visionaustralia.org/services/funding/other-funding/further-education-bursary>

### World Access For the Blind Australia

Orientation and mobility educators specialising in echo location and flash sonar.

Contact: http://www.worldaccessfortheblindaustralia.org.au/contact-us/

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

## 6. Transport and Travel

### Public Transport Victoria (PTV)

Find destinations, stops and routes and stay up-to-date on any disruptions or changes to transport services.

Website: <https://www.ptv.vic.gov.au/>

### Tram Tracker

If you're in Melbourne, find out when your tram is coming and other travel information via your iPhone, Android device or online.

Website: <https://yarratrams.com.au/tramtracker>

### Vline

VLine offers an app, SMS alert and social media to stay up to date with service information and timetables

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

### 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 air-line for their specific information.

### Community Transport

Community transport or Community Connections are local / council based services that assist people with a disability and their carers for whom conventional public transport systems may not be an appropriate option. To find out more contact your local council. Please note that not all councils will have community transport options available.

### Australian Disability Parking Scheme

Permit holders can park in parking spaces showing the international symbol of access and can receive concessions in most public parking spaces where the sign or meter shows specific time limits. All enquiries about permit applications, cost, eligibility and use should be directed to the relevant State or Territory authority.

Website: <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/programmes-services/for-people-with-disability/australian-disability-parking-scheme>

### Multi-Purpose Taxi Program

The MPTP assists with the travel needs of people with severe and permanent disabilities by offering subsidized taxi fares.

Website: <https://cpv.vic.gov.au/passengers/mptp>

### Qantas Carer Concession Card

The Qantas Carer Concession Card is issued to people with disability and high level support needs who require the full-time assistance of a carer whilst they are on the aircraft. A person is eligible if they need to have one-on-one support when seated on the aircraft for assistance with meals/drinks, transferring to the bathroom, orientation, communicating with the flight staff etc. A person is not eligible if they only need assistance boarding the aircraft, or when they arrive at their destination.

Website: <http://www.pwd.org.au/what-we-do/qantascarerconcession.html>

### Travellers’ Aid

Travellers’ Aid operates at Southern Cross Station, Flinders Street Station and Seymour Station. It provides simple, practical travel-related support and aid that helps people independently and confidently travel to work, education and leisure. Services include Emergency Travel Relief, companionship, buddy and personal guidance, tourist information and rest.

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

### Vision Impaired Travel Pass

The Vision Impaired Travel Pass gives free travel on public transport to customers who are legally blind. Pass holders aren't required to touch on and off, but must show the card to public transport staff when requested. Other states’ Vision Impaired cards are accepted and can be used as a flash pass.

Website: <https://www.ptv.vic.gov.au/tickets/myki/concessions-and-free-travel/vision-impaired-travel-pass/>

## 7. Education

### Australian Network on Disability

The Australian Network on Disability connect people with disability to business. They provide Internships (including paid internships), mentorships and employer led recruitment strategies.

Phone: (02)82709200 or 1300363645

Email: info@and.org.au

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

### 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.

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

### Department of Justice and Community Safety Disability Leadership Scholarship Program

The Disability Scholarship Program is an initiative from the department's Disability Action Plan. The program aims to achieve a long-term increase in the number of qualified people with a disability employed across all areas and all levels of the public service.

Website: <https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/careers/disability-scholarship-program#breadcrumbs>

### Disability Liaison / 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. They facilitate reasonable adjustments to enable you to study such as accessible formats and extensions. Contact your institution for further details.

### Australian Disability Clearing House on Education and Training

This website is designed for people with disability and/or medical conditions. 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.

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

## 8. Employment Services

### Disability Employment Services

Disability Employment Services providers play a specialist role in helping people with disability, injury or health conditions get ready to look for a job, find a job, and keep a job. Use the provider search function to find a disability employment service provider near you.

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

### Australian Apprenticeships

The Australian Government, in acknowledging the contribution people with disability make to their communities and workplaces, provides additional support to Australian Apprentices with disability to help them reach their full potential as skilled workers.

Website: <https://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/financial-programs>

## 9. Entertainment

### Audio Description

Audio description is an additional narration track intended primarily for blind and visually impaired consumers of visual media (including television and film, dance, opera, and visual art). Check with the cinema, theatre or event for availability of this service.

The ABC and SBS both offer a number of programs with audio description. Search on the ABC and SBS websites for a weekly schedule of which programs will be audio described.

 Streaming services such as Netflix and Disney+ also offer some programs with audio description. Check whichever streaming services you use to see if they provide programs with audio description. If the information is not easily found, you might try googling “audio description” and the specific streaming service name to see what is available and how to enable Audio description on that platform.

### Vision Australia Audio Description

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. For more information, or for a list of upcoming performances:

Phone: 1300 847 466

Website: <https://www.visionaustralia.org/business-consulting/audio-description>

### Description Victoria

Description Victoria provides professional description services for art and media.

Describers come from a variety of backgrounds and disciplines in art, performance and media, combining their own expertise with expert training in description. We have described for theatre shows, exhibitions, documentary videos, films, fireworks displays and live art experiences. Audio description can be adapted to any work in any medium.

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

### Arts Access Victoria

AAV is the peak body for arts and disability in Victoria. They are a disability-led organisation that plays a vital role in state, national and international discourse. AAV is the leading force behind a more accessible arts and cultural sector.

Phone: (03)96998299 (voice only) or 0477860955 (text or voice)

Email: info@artsaccess.com.au

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

### Companion Card

The Companion Card is issued to people with a significant, permanent disability, who can demonstrate that they are unable to access most community activities and venues without attendant care support. Participating organisations will issue the cardholder with a second ticket for their companion at no charge. Some examples of participating organisations are entertainment companies and venues, tourist attractions, theatres and cinemas.

Website: <https://www.companioncard.vic.gov.au/>

### Vision Australia Library

Members of the Vision Australia library can access a range of reading materials including audio books, magazines, newspapers, Braille, podcasts, journals, references, language resources and more. Library members are also entitled to 360 pages of print converted to an accessible format each year.

Phone: 1300 847 466

Website: <https://www.visionaustralia.org/services/library?gclid=EAIaIQobChMI9qeq-dXw_AIV2MFMAh0xigV2EAAYASABEgIm1fD_BwE>

### Public Libraries

Most public libraries carry a collection of audiobooks. They also have options to access audiobooks online through various platforms including BorrowBox. Visit your local library’s website or ask staff for more information on accessing these services.

### Travel Tours

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

#### Cocky Guides

At Cocky Guides, we 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. It’s our number one priority to make sure our 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

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: 113 834 6094

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

## 10. Home and Living

### Home and Community Care (HACC) Program for Younger People

The HACC Program for Younger People provides basic support and maintenance services to help people with disabilities remain living at home as independently as possible.

Website: <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/home-and-community-care/hacc-program-for-younger-people>

### National Equipment Database

A database of available assistive technology and other disability-related products.

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

### Telephone Services

Some telecommunications providers such as Optus and Telstra provide services that can assist people who are blind or vision impaired. Such services include: bills in alternative formats, calls connect fee exemptions, free operator assisted directory services and phone equipment such as big button phones, Easy Read Stickers, Abbreviated dialing. Some telecommunications providers also provide telephone services at discounted rates for Pension Card holders. Contact your telephone service provider for more information on available discounts.

## 11. 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.

### Bowls

Bowls Victoria is a bowling club where everyone is welcome including blind / vision impaired bowlers. To arrange your own game and supports you can contact them directly. If you need assistance learning how to play bowls with a vision impairment contact blind sports and Recreation Victoria (details provided earlier in this document).

Website: <https://www.bowlsvic.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. Contact the Victorian Blind Cricket Association.

Website: <https://www.vbca.org.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. Contact Victorian Goal Ball Association.

Website: <http://goalball.org.au/>

### 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 golfers’ 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. Contact Blind Golf Australia.

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

### 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. Contact Riding for the Disabled Association of Victoria (RDAV).

Website: <https://www.rda.org.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 assisting them in developing their sailing skills, whether it is for competition or simply recreation. Contact Sailability.

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

### Surfing

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. Contact Disabled Surfers Association Australia.

Website: <https://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. Swish can be played at Vision Australia.

Website: <https://www.facebook.com/vicvitabletennis/>

### Blind Tennis

Tennis Australia is committed to increasing opportunities for blind and vision impaired players. There are various categories and classifications based on a person’s level of vision impairment.

Website: <https://www.tennis.com.au/play/inclusion-and-diversity/blind-and-low-vision/about>

## 12. Miscellaneous Services and Support

### Postal Concessions for the Blind Program

The Postal Concessions for the Blind (PCB) program provides free postal for eligible items, through Australia Post, for people who are blind or vision impaired, and organisations whose primary purpose is to service the needs of the blind and vision impaired. There is criteria around what can be sent using this program and steps to follow to make sure your mail is sent correctly.

Website: <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/program-services/for-people-with-disability/postal-concessions-for-the-blind-program#:~:text=The%20Postal%20Concessions%20for%20the,the%20blind%20and%20vision%20impaired>.

### Photo Identification

The Australia Post Keypass identity card is a photo ID card that is easy to obtain and use no matter your age. It is valid as an Australian ID across all states.

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

### Proof of Age Card

The Victorian Proof of Age card is used to verify that the person seeking to enter the licensed premises or purchase liquor is over 18 years of age. This card is recognised throughout Australia.

Website: <https://www.vgccc.vic.gov.au/resources/liquor-resources/proof-age>

## 13. Complaint-handling bodies

Important note:

Unfortunately, sometimes things go wrong. At some point in time, you might find yourself in a situation where you are treated unfairly because of your blindness or vision impairment. This could involve things like:

• Being harassed at school or in the workplace for reasons relating to blindness or vision impairment.

• Being refused access to a public place, such as a restaurant or café, because you are accompanied by a Guide or Seeing Eye Dog.

• Having difficulty accessing systems, services and facilities that are available to the public because they are not accessible to people who are blind.

In other situations, you might feel that a Government Agency such as Centrelink or the National Disability Insurance Agency has assessed your case incorrectly and is not providing you with the support you are entitled to.

If you experience any of these problems, there are places you can go to complain. We’ve included some key complaint-handling and dispute resolution bodies in this section, but it can still be a little confusing to know which one might apply to your own set of circumstances. If you aren’t quite sure where to start, it might be useful for you to speak to an advocate. You can find more information about advocacy services in the next section. There is also an online directory called

### Complaint Line

The Complaint line service is an online directory and gateway to information to help you get a resolution to your complaint. They are not a dispute resolution service and can not give specific advice.

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

### Consumer Affairs Victoria

Promotes consumer protection and ethical trading and ensures that consumer protection laws are properly enforced.

Phone: 1300 55 81 81

Website: <https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/>

### Disability Services Commissioner

An independent oversight body resolving complaints and promoting the right of people with a disability to be free from abuse.

Phone: 1800 677 342

Website: <https://www.odsc.vic.gov.au/>

### Victorian Energy and Water Ombudsman

Investigates and resolves disputes between Victorian electricity, gas and water customers and their providers.

Phone: 1800 500 509

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

### Victorian Health Complaints Commissioner

This body deals with problems with a health service or concerns about health privacy.

Phone: 1300582113

Website: <https://hcc.vic.gov.au/>

### Victorian Public Transport Ombudsman

The Public Transport Ombudsman deals with complaints about Victorian public transport that members of the community have been unable to resolve directly with the public transport operators.

Phone: 1800 466 865

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

### Victorian Office of the Public Advocate

Safeguards the rights and interests of Victorian people with disabilities.

Phone: 1300 309 337

Website: <https://www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au/>

### Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT)

VCAT is a tribunal that hears and decides civil and administrative legal cases in the State of Victoria, Australia.

Phone: 1300018228

Website: <https://www.vcat.vic.gov.au/>

### Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission

Responsible for eliminating discrimination in Victoria. Offers information, education and consultancy services, conducts research and provides legal and policy advice.

Phone: 1300 292 153

Website: <https://www.humanrights.vic.gov.au/>

### Victorian Ombudsman

The Victorian Ombudsman is an independent officer of the Victorian Parliament who investigates complaints about state government departments, most statutory authorities and local government. The Ombudsman investigates complaints about administrative actions and decisions taken by government authorities and about the conduct or behaviour of their staff. The Ombudsman is independent and impartial and provides a free service.

Phone: (03)96136222 or 1800 806 314

Website: <https://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/>

## 14. Advocacy Support

Important note:

Sometimes it can be difficult to know how to approach a matter when you have been discriminated against or treated unfairly. If you would like to talk to someone about the problem you are facing to explore the options are available to you, and advocate can help. An advocate’s job is to make sure your rights are upheld and they are there to support you to resolve your complaint.

### Blind Citizens Australia Advocacy (BCA)

Blind Citizens Australia is here to help people who require support to uphold their rights, gain access or receive services that are unreasonably impeded due to their blindness or vision impairment. Blind Citizens Australia's Advocacy staff can provide you with specialist information and advice on a wide range of issues, including discrimination, access to information, access to built environment, public transport, education, employment, income supports and other issues.

Phone: 1800 033 660

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

### Aged Care Rights Service (TARS)

TARS is an advocacy service for older residents of nursing homes, hostels and retirement villages and people receiving Community Aged Care Packages.

Phone: 1800700600 or (08)82325377

Website: <https://sa.agedrights.asn.au/>

## 15. Legal Support

Important note:

Most advocacy cases are unable to provide formal legal advice. If you have a discrimination matter that is more complex and is unable to be resolved through the support of an advocate, you may need to seek legal advice and/or representation.

### Disability Discrimination Legal Service

The Disability Discrimination Legal Service Inc. (DDLS) is a

state-wide independent community legal centre that specialises in disability discrimination legal matters. DDLS provides free legal services in several areas including information, referral, advice, casework assistance, community legal education, and policy and law reform.

Phone: 03 9654 8644

Website: <http://ddlsaustralia.org/about-us/>

## 16. Other payments and Government support

Note: In certain circumstances, you may be able to access other Government support based on your individual situation.

### Dental Services

Holders of a Pensioner Concession Card are eligible for dental services at a concession rate from the Dental Health Services Victoria.

Website: <https://www.dhsv.org.au/our-services/information/fees#exemptions>

### Concession and Health Care Cards

Concession and health care cards can get you cheaper health services and medicines. The type of concession or health care card depends on your situation.

Website: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/health-care-card>

### Hearing Services Program

The Australian Government Hearing Services Program aims to reduce the impact of hearing loss by providing eligible people with access to hearing services.

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/)

### Housing

DFFH Victoria provides a range of housing solutions for Victorian families and individuals needing to gain safe and permanent housing.

Website: <https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/housing>

### Land Transfer Duty

In Victoria, if you are a Pensioner or first home buyer, there may be some exemptions or concession’s available on certain fees. Find out what is available and remember to seek professional advice if you are unsure if you are eligible for any concessions.

Website: <https://www.sro.vic.gov.au/land-transfer-duty#exemptions>