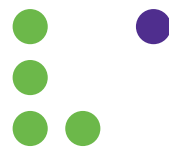


# Vision Australia 2014 Victorian Election Priorities



vision  
australia

blindness and low vision services

**There are approximately 90,000 Victorians who are blind or have low vision. Due to our ageing population, this number is expected to rise significantly during the term of the next Victorian Government. Significant progress has been made to help Victorians who are blind or have low vision to live the lives they choose. But there is more to be done.**

**This document outlines our key priorities for the 2014 state election. Vision Australia seeks a commitment on these seven priorities from parties and candidates to keep improving this State for blind and low vision Victorians.**

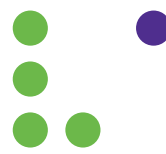
## Funding

**Without ongoing contracted funding from the Government, Vision Australia will be unable to provide our current level of services and support to Victorians who are blind or have low vision. We are particularly concerned about how services for people living in country Victoria and people over the age of 65 will be funded.**

Vision Australia advocated for the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and is an active service provider in the trial sites. The ongoing transition from block funding of disability service providers

to individual packages under the NDIS is the number one challenge facing our clients and Vision Australia.

Vision Australia calls on the next Victorian Government to continue the current in-kind funding arrangements, until at least the full NDIS rollout has been completed, to ensure that blindness and low vision services are provided across the State to Victorians of all ages.



## Getting Around

### **Consistent, clear, audible announcements on all public transport**

**On many routes people who are blind or have low vision need to count stops (which are often skipped), ask for assistance, or 'make a best guess' as to when to alight.**

Vision Australia is working with the Victorian Government and public transport providers to ensure that consistent, clear audible announcements are made on all public transport journeys in Victoria and there are now announcements on some routes.

Vision Australia calls on the next Victorian Government to mandate consistent, clear audible announcements to be made on all public transport journeys in Victoria.

### **Protection for Seeing Eye Dog puppies and their development**

**Seeing Eye Dog puppy carers make a big commitment by providing important socialisation and basic training. Cafes and other social interactions are an essential part of puppy training and the law in Victoria is not clear.**

Seeing Eye Dogs enable Australians who are blind or have low vision to retain their independence and mobility. They allow people to move more quickly and navigate obstacles with much more reliability and safely.

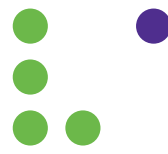
From the age of eight weeks old through to 12 months, Seeing Eye Dog puppies are placed with a generous volunteer member of the community who care for them.

Vision Australia calls on the next Victorian Government to introduce specific legislation, like that which exists in Queensland (Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act 2009), to ensure that appropriate protections exist for puppies in development.

### **Prevent disruption to Seeing Eye Dogs training**

**Vision Australia must continue to train Seeing Eye Dogs but the proposed East West Link could disrupt the facility and prevent this important work from being done.**

Vision Australia's new state-of-the-art, purpose built, recently opened, Seeing Eye Dogs Australia facility in Kensington is essential for our clients providing the means to a lifetime of independence. Its location, with excellent public transport and less than two kilometres from the Central Business District, is part of the strength of the facility.



\$8 million in donations from members of the community and business have assisted Vision Australia to build this special facility.

Vision Australia calls on the next Victorian Government to ensure the ongoing training of Seeing Eye Dogs by protecting the site from disruption.

## Ensuring access to taxi services

**Anecdotal evidence and reports from taxi regulators and equal opportunity authorities on formal complaints show that barriers to access include taxi drivers who refuse to pick up passengers with dog guides and other mobility aids.**

Taxis represent the closest equivalent to autonomous car travel, and are often a crucial link to maintaining employment, gaining an education, and participating in recreational, sporting and other community activities, for people who are blind or have low vision.

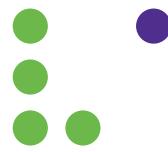
Vision Australia calls on the next Victorian Government to increase penalties for taxi drivers who refuse to carry passengers using Seeing Eye Dogs or who in other ways discriminate against people who are blind or have low vision.

## Delivering accessible and functional infrastructure

**There are significant barriers that prevent many people who are blind or have low vision to safely and independently access streets and footpaths like their sighted peers do.**

Building the capacity of clients to access the built environment of their communities is one of Vision Australia's core services. Vision Australia has worked with VicRoads and local councils to improve accessibility of Victoria's footpaths and streets but there are still many improvements to be made. This will require more robust and consistent collaboration between VicRoads and Vision Australia and continued commitment by the government to making these improvements.

Vision Australia calls on the next Victorian Government to ensure resources are dedicated to improving existing and delivering new infrastructure which is accessible and functional and enables people who are blind or have low vision to feel safe and confident to move about their communities.



## Accessible voting

**The right to a confidential vote is taken for granted by most Victorians – but for those without the means of sight this remains tantalisingly out of reach.**

Accessible voting was introduced in a limited fashion in 2006 (only in select locations and not on polling day). In 2010 and 2014 further changes have been made, including using different types of technology to cast a vote. But Victoria is still behind other states such as NSW.

In NSW, iVote – a system much like telephone or internet banking –allows a person with a disability to vote just as the founders of our democracy intended, independently and in secret. What is more, the iVote system enjoys widespread support and is being expanded.

Vision Australia calls on the next Victorian Government to ensure that the Victorian Electoral Commission introduces an online voting system for the next election to cater for the needs of all Victorians and allow a person who is blind or has low vision to vote.

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