



Vision Australia

Blindness. Low Vision. Opportunity.

Emotional Support – Quality Living Groups



Being diagnosed with a vision condition can be life-changing. It often comes with minimal help and many are left asking themselves, 'what now?'

At Vision Australia, we think it's vitally important for people who are newly diagnosed to connect with others who are going through similar situations.

Having an honest forum to discuss the issues and emotions associated with vision loss, while listening to others talk about how they have coped and built resilience, is a proven way to improve someone's mental health and general wellbeing.

What are Quality Living Groups?

Quality Living Groups are Vision Australia's emotional support groups for people who have recently been diagnosed with a vision condition.

They are confidential, safe and supportive forums to discuss the issues relating to the impacts of vision loss.

With most of our coordinators having lived experience, the groups also provide useful practical knowledge – like adjusting things at home, learning to navigate around your neighbourhood, understanding the latest assistive technology options and help with maintaining friendships and social ties post diagnosis.

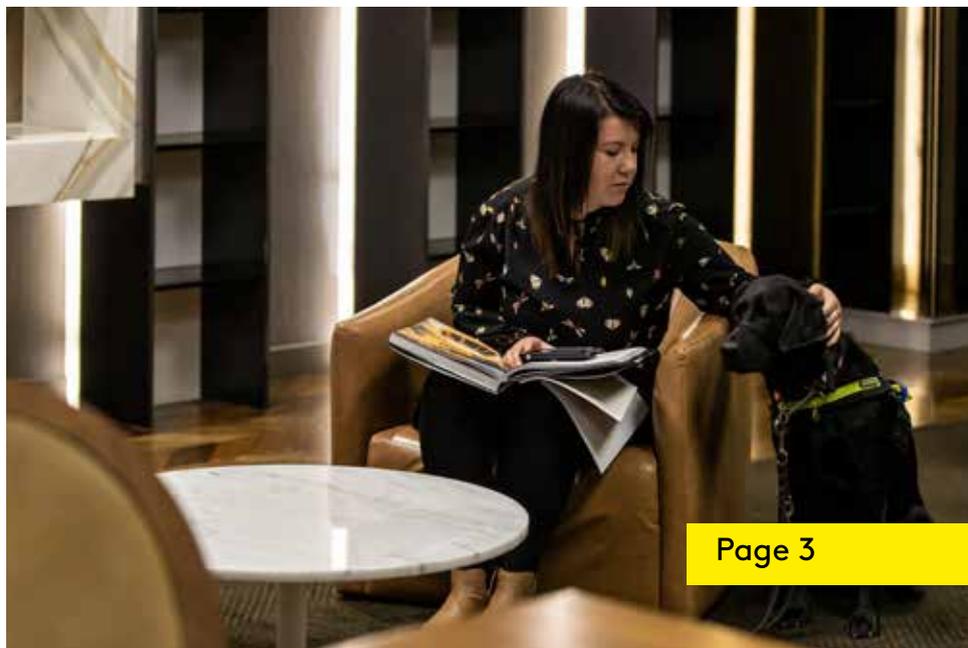
How do they work?

- 2.5 hours commitment each week over-the-phone (or in-person at select locations)
- Eight week course led by participants' needs
- Eight participants maximum per group
- Facilitated by trained coordinators, with special expert guests on certain topics

Group participants decide on the topics which best meet their needs and those topics fill the course.

Each group is unique, which is why some people have signed up to multiple courses over the years.

Britnee,
Vision Australia client



What type of groups are on offer?

Our emotional support groups are varied and cover:

- Adult groups
- Seniors groups
- Parents groups
- Carers groups
- Education or employment focused groups

The groups run regularly throughout the year and some can be taken after hours for working people.

They are conducted over-the-phone and on occasion in-person at a Vision Australia office.

Regular topics covered in the groups:

1.	Getting out and about confidently
2.	Staying independent with everyday tasks
3.	A brave new world of technology
4.	Staying socially active and enjoying personal interests
5.	Relationship changes, communicating with family and friends

Eligibility and cost?

The program is open to anyone who is blind or has low vision, or is a carer.

The cost is covered by your NDIS plan or My Aged Care if you're an older adult.

If you don't have any of these services, the program is still open to you, just call **1300 84 74 66** to find out more.

Why should I join?

Many people who have joined a Quality Living Group say that it has been one of the best things they've done since experiencing vision loss.

They've been able to share their ideas about making life easier, talk about barriers they're facing, feel supported by others who really understand, and often make lifelong friends.

How do I join?

Register your interest here:

visionaustralia.org/qualityliving

Or scan the QR code beneath:



What will I know after finishing the course?

While everyone's experience is unique, some things you can gain from the group include:

- Develop strategies to cope, build resilience and confidence
- Learn how others who are blind or have low vision handle everyday tasks
- Learn what technologies are available to help you (ie white canes, smartphones to help you read menus or identify colours, magnifiers, library tools etc.)
- Discuss ways to talk about your eye condition with friends, family and strangers
- Learn ways to handle negative questions
- Overcome isolation
- Develop a social support network and make new friends

Paul Hedley, 59, peer-support volunteer & former participant

“When I lost my eyesight I felt like I was the only person going through what I was going through.

The Quality Living Groups gave me the opportunity to interact with other people from different walks of life that were going through the exact same thing as me.

When you first start, you're emotionally very raw. Most people are crying, they're upset, they've lost or are losing their vision and they don't know what to do. After eight weeks I'd say 80 to 90 per cent of people are just different. They're so happy and confident and they have a way forward with their lives.

I did two Quality Living Groups and after both of them I just felt like someone had filled up my tool box with a whole bunch of really useful tips and strategies to deal with my vision loss. The more time you can spend with people who are in a similar situation, the better. You start to develop your self-esteem and your confidence.

The groups are about being kind to yourself and allowing yourself the time to learn things that you need to learn, and also allowing yourself to make mistakes. Seek out that advice, it'll be one of the best things you can do for yourself.”



To hear
Paul's story



To hear
Brittnee's story



Brittnee Watson, 27, former Quality Living Group participant

"The Quality Living Group honestly made me feel like there was life after blindness.

That I wasn't going to be just stuck at home with my mum looking after me the whole time that I could live by myself, get a job and do anything I really wanted to do without the fear of being looked after the whole time.

The group came at a really pivotal time in my life. I had just started the course when I had my first experience of going completely blind. I had always rested on having a little bit of vision left to get me around, but this time, I had nothing. It was really scary. But I was able to share my anxieties and feelings as they were happening with a really understanding group. They were able to encourage me and give me immediate tips and tricks to make my life easier.

You realise that no question is a stupid question. That if you're thinking it that somebody else is thinking it too. If you needed to ask for advice, it was easy. The Quality Living Groups teach you to use blindness to your benefit."

Vision Australia can help you connect with others.

Call us on 1300 84 74 66

Read more about Quality Living Groups here:
visionaustralia.org/qualityliving

Find out more about Vision Australia

visionaustralia.org

Email info@visionaustralia.org



facebook.com/visionaustralia



twitter.com/visionaustralia

visionaustralia.org



Vision Australia

Blindness. Low Vision. Opportunity.