

Victorian Election Priorities 2026

Living without limits in Victoria



Executive summary

Vision Australia's purpose is to enable people who are blind or have low vision to live without limits. We envision an inclusive Australia that unlocks possibility, where people who are blind or have low vision live with confidence, connection and independence.

Nearly 100,000 Victorians are blind or have low vision, and this number will continue to grow as the population ages. Despite some progress, many people continue to face barriers to accessing information, travelling independently, obtaining employment and participating fully in community life.

For more than 150 years, Vision Australia and its predecessor organisations have worked alongside people who are blind or have low vision to provide support and remove barriers to participation. As Australia's leading blindness and low vision service provider, we assist people at every stage of life through specialist services, advocacy and community engagement.

This document outlines Vision Australia's 5 priorities for the next Victorian Government. These priorities focus on practical actions that will improve accessibility, strengthen inclusion and support greater independence and participation.

Vision Australia's 5 priorities for the next Victorian Government

Priority	Request
Driverless Taxi Pilot	Fund an autonomous accessible taxi pilot in Victoria, co-designed with people who are blind or have low vision.
Attacks on Dog Guides	Create a specific offence and higher penalties for any owner of a dog that attacks a dog guide.
Audio Announcements on Public Transport	Introduce clear, audible and consistent bus announcements. Enhance onboard and platform announcements for trains.
Vision Australia Radio	Invest \$250,000 in Vision Australia Radio so that Victorians who are blind or have low vision can continue to access high quality, relevant and accessible information which meets their needs.
Work Skills Traineeships	Fund a supported training and employment program in Victoria for people with disability.

Introduction

Vision Australia's purpose is to enable people who are blind or have low vision to live without limits. Our vision is for an inclusive Australia that unlocks possibility, where people who are blind or have low vision live with confidence, connection and independence. For more than 150 years, we have worked alongside individuals, families and governments to remove barriers to participation and create more accessible and inclusive communities.

As the nation's leading blindness and low vision service provider, Vision Australia supports people at every stage of life through a broad range of programs, including disability employment services, children's services, specialist allied health services, and dog guide services. We are a provider of NDIS and aged care services and manage Australia's only national library for people with a print disability, providing access to more than 40,000 accessible titles. Vision Australia has also been operating a radio service for more than four decades which delivers accessible news, information and connection to meet the needs of people who are blind or have low vision.

Government decisions and investment have a significant impact on whether people who are blind or have low vision can participate fully in education, employment and community life. The 2026 Victorian Election provides an opportunity to improve outcomes for these Victorians. With the correct policy settings and targeted investment, Victoria can become a more accessible and inclusive State for the nearly 100,000 Victorians who are blind or have low vision.

Our election priorities are informed by lived experience and reflect the needs of people across life stages. By addressing the priorities outlined in this document, the Victorian Government will better allow people who are blind or have low vision to live without limits, whilst also delivering broader benefits for people with disability, their families and the wider community.

Priority 1: Driverless Taxi Pilot

For people who are blind or have low vision access to transport is crucial for engagement in all aspects of life. Yet, this cohort continues to face barriers to accessing safe, reliable and flexible transport options, and challenges to navigating transport systems independently. National data shows that only 63% of people with disability can use all forms of public transport without difficulty.¹

Autonomous vehicle technology presents a significant opportunity to address these transport barriers. Research developed in partnership with the Australian Government has identified connected and automated vehicles as an emerging solution that can improve mobility, independence and access to essential services for people with disability². These vehicles also have the potential to reduce transport disadvantage, and inform the design of accessible transport systems going forward.

Internationally, autonomous taxi services are already operating or being trialled in cities such as Phoenix, San Francisco, Austin, Singapore and Beijing. These programs are demonstrating how autonomous transport can expand mobility options for people who cannot drive and provide greater independence via safe, on-demand travel.

Victoria has already demonstrated leadership in automated vehicle innovation through its Automated Driving System permit scheme and support for on-road automated vehicle testing. These initiatives have helped established a regulatory framework to safely trial emerging transport technologies.

Building on this foundation, Victoria is well positioned to explore how automated vehicle technology can improve mobility outcomes for people with disability. A dedicated driverless taxi pilot would test how these technologies can deliver practical benefits for people who are unable to drive, and generate valuable evidence to inform future transport planning.

Accessible autonomous transport has the potential to be one of the most significant advances in independent mobility for people who are blind or have low vision, as well as other disability cohorts. A trial of autonomous taxis would position Victoria as a leader in inclusive transport innovation.

Vision Australia calls on the next Victorian Government to:

Fund an autonomous accessible taxi pilot in Victoria, co-designed with people who are blind or have low vision.

Priority 2: Attacks on Dog Guides

Dog guides are highly trained assistance animals that provide safe, independent mobility for people who are blind or have low vision, enabling greater participation, confidence and inclusion. Vision Australia Seeing Eye Dogs is a national provider of dog guides, having 258 active Seeing Eye Dog handlers across Australia as at the end of the 2025 financial year.

Vision Australia has recently become aware of an increased incidence of attacks on dog guides by other dogs. Since July 2025, five Seeing Eye Dogs having been attacked, with two of those dogs having to be retired as a result of the attack.

When a dog guide is attacked, the consequences can be significant for the handler, the dog and the community. In particular:

- The handler may be placed in immediate physical danger should the dog be distracted or injured as a result of the attack.
- The dog may be unable to continue working as a result of the attack due to physical injury, fear or anxiety, or loss of confidence in public. If this occurs, the handler's ability to travel independently can be temporarily or permanently affected resulting in emotional distress and disruption to employment, education, and social participation.
- Attacks can discourage people who are blind or have low vision from travelling independently and undermine the effectiveness of dog guide programs that provide crucial mobility support. There is also a significant cost associated with the retraining or replacement of a dog guide.

The Domestic Animals Act 1994 (Vic) treats attacks on dog guides in the same way as attacks on companion animals. This fails to reflect the fundamental role dog guides play as assistance animals, and the significant consequences that attacks can have on a handler's independence, confidence, safety and community participation.

Vision Australia seeks that the Domestic Animals Act 1994 (Vic) be amended to remedy this anomaly, consistent with provisions that exist in the United Kingdom. A Seeing Eye Dog handler whose dog recently experienced an attack currently has a petition before the Victorian Parliament also asking for these attacks to be treated more seriously under the law.

Vision Australia calls on the next Victorian Government to:

Amend the Domestic Animals Act 1994 (Vic) to create a specific offence and higher penalties for any owner of a dog that attacks a dog guide.

Priority 3: Audio Announcements on Public Transport

People who are blind or have low vision cannot drive and rely on public and point to point transport to travel independently. Public transport is essential for accessing employment, education, healthcare and social and community activities.

Audio announcements play a critical role in enabling people who are blind or have low vision to navigate public transport safely and independently. However Victorian buses do not provide onboard audio announcements, making bus travel considerably more difficult and riskier than train and tram services.

Without audio announcements on buses, passengers who are blind or have low vision face the constant risk of missing their stop, forcing them to either disembark in unfamiliar locations or make rushed and potentially unsafe attempts to exit the bus. The absence of this basic accessibility feature exposes passengers to possible harm and impacts their ability to travel with confidence and independence.

While train services in Victoria do provide audio announcements, these announcements are often unclear, inaccurate or delivered too late to be effective. Onboard announcements do not consistently meet the standard achieved in other Australian jurisdictions and can be unreliable, causing uncertainty and stress for passengers who depend on them to identify the correct stop. Platform announcements are also inconsistent, making it difficult for passengers to safely navigate stations and connecting services. Late, unclear, or inaccurate announcements increase the risk of injury by forcing passengers to rush to board or disembark trains.

The Victorian Government's Melbourne Train Refranchising Project presents a timely opportunity to embed stronger accessibility outcomes across Melbourne's rail network. Shortlisted bidders for this project should be required to demonstrate how they will deliver reliable and consistent audio announcements on a system-wide scale, as part of their proposals.

It is vital that all public transport services in Victoria provide clear, accurate and timely audio announcements to ensure that the transport network is safe, accessible and inclusive for people who are blind or have low vision, as well as other passengers who use these services.

Vision Australia calls on the next Victorian Government to:

- Introduce clear, audible and consistent bus announcements.
- Enhance onboard and platform announcements for trains.

Priority 4: Vision Australia Radio

For people who are blind or have low vision, access to information is fundamental to participation in society. For over four decades, Vision Australia Radio has delivered accessible news, current affairs, government information, health information, community updates and cultural content to Victorians across metropolitan and regional areas, as well as to people in other Australian States.

Vision Australia Radio operates substantially through a volunteer workforce. For the 2025 financial year, Vision Australia Radio volunteers produced in excess of 39,000 hours of content across the network.

Through its extensive volunteer network and statewide reach, Vision Australia Radio delivers significant social value. In particular, it:

- Provides connection through local programming, interviews, community information and specialist content relevant to people with disability. This results in reduced isolation and improved wellbeing outcomes, particularly for older Australians and those in regional areas.
- Advances the objectives of the Victorian State Disability Plan which commits to improving inclusion, participation, connection and access to information for people with disability.
- Plays an important role in making emergency information accessible. It was of particular significance in facilitating ABC emergency broadcast coverage during recent bushfires in regional Victoria.
- Provides an established channel through which government information can reach audiences who may not be able to access traditional communication methods.

Government investment in Vision Australia Radio would sustain and expand a high-impact service that enables Victorians who are blind or have low vision to access information, stay connected to their communities and participate fully in society.

Vision Australia calls on the next Victorian Government to:

Invest \$250,000 in Vision Australia Radio so that Victorians who are blind or have low vision can continue to access high quality, relevant and accessible information which meets their needs.

Priority 5: Work Skills Traineeships

It is well known that people with a disability remain significantly underrepresented in Australian workforces. In 2022, only 60.5% of working-age people with disability participated in the labour force, compared with 84.9% of people without disability, while the unemployment rate for people with disability was more than double that of people without disability³.

Around 260,000 Australians with disability are considered potentially job-ready but remain excluded from employment opportunities⁴. Despite strong motivation to work many job-ready people with disability are unemployed due to external barriers such as limited suitable job opportunities, discrimination and a lack of workplace adjustments, rather than their disability itself, and are disconnected from support services⁵.

Victoria has an opportunity to unlock a significant and underutilised workforce by investing in supported training and employment pathways for people with disability. This could be modelled on Queensland's successful Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative, which has supported more than 100,000 participants since 2015, and assisted over 65,000 participants into long-term employment. Vision Australia's own Career Visions program funded through this initiative, has supported 84 people who are blind or have low vision, resulting in 47 participants securing employment and 28 progressing to further study.

A Victorian equivalent program could provide supported training, work-readiness assistance, mentoring, industry placements and pathways to accredited qualifications and employment. Delivered through partnerships between disability organisations, training providers and employers, it would increase workforce participation, while addressing skills shortages across Victoria.

An investment in supported training opportunities for Victorians with disability would improve economic security and social inclusion for people with disability, as well as delivering long benefits for employers, communities and the Victorian economy.

Vision Australia calls on the next Victorian Government to:

Fund a supported training and employment program in Victoria for people with disability, modelled on the Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative.

Conclusion and call to action

Vision Australia calls on all parties and candidates to commit to these priorities and work together to build a more accessible and inclusive Victoria.

People who are blind or have low vision want the same opportunities as every other Victorian. They deserve to be able to access information, travel independently, participate in education and employment, and contribute to their communities. However, many continue to encounter barriers that limit their independence, participation and quality of life.

The priorities outlined in this document represent practical and achievable actions that will improve outcomes for people who are blind or have low vision. Investment in these priorities will also deliver broader social and economic benefits by creating communities, services and infrastructure that work better for everyone.

The next Victorian Government has an opportunity to fully embrace the principles of accessibility and inclusion in its policy and service delivery, and help create a State where people who are blind or have low vision can truly live with confidence, connection and independence.

Vision Australia stands ready to work with government to deliver these outcomes.

Endnotes

- 1 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2025) Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031 Outcomes Framework: 3rd annual report, catalogue number ADS 5, AIHW, Australian Government.
- 2 APEC Transportation Working Group (2024) Improving the Accessibility and Inclusivity of Public Transport through New and Emerging Transport Technologies: Best Practice for Policy
- 3 Australian Bureau of Statistics 2022 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers
- 4 Australian Bureau of Statistics 2022 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers
- 5 Jobs and Skills Australia (2026) Employment and disability in Australia, Australian Government