

# VISION AUSTRALIA 2018



**Victorian Election Priorities**

Santiago, Vision Australia client

# Victorians who are blind or have low vision matter

It is estimated that nearly 100,000 Victorians are blind or have low vision<sup>1</sup>, and this number will continue to rise as our population ages. Vision Australia is the nation's largest blindness and low vision service provider.

With over **200,000** Vision Australia supporters just in Victoria, the community respect us as the nation's leading expert in our field.

## For more than 150 years:

Vision Australia, and its predecessors, has delivered services for our clients so they can live the life they choose.

Through our 29 centres, we support individuals at every stage of life, by providing a broad range of services, including: disability employment services, expert clinical advice, children services and orientation and mobility training.

We are also a leading provider of NDIS and My Aged Care for people who are blind or have low vision.

Finally, one of our most utilised services is our library. It is the only one of its type in our nation, providing people with a print disability access to more than 43,000 accessible book titles.

**We are pleased to present our 2018 Victorian Election Priorities, which were developed in consultation with Victorians who are blind or have low vision, most notably voters.**

If you invest in issues that matter to people who are blind or have low vision, a significant positive impact will be felt by the blindness and low vision community and in some areas, by all people with disability.

**Vision Australia's key priorities are as follows:**



## **NDIS**

Additional support to ensure Victorians with disability are not disadvantaged by the growing challenges of the NDIS.



## **Travel Subsidies**

Maintaining and expanding the Multi Purpose Taxi Program card, introducing audio announcements on buses and increasing the quality of audio announcements on trains.



## **Employment**

Increasing public sector employment opportunities.



Neslihan, Vision Australia client

## Improving disability employment via accessibility standards and graduate positions

**It's well known people with a disability still remain significantly underrepresented in Australian workforces.**

**Forty five percent of Australians with a disability live at or below the poverty line<sup>2</sup>.**

**This shameful statistic is largely due to people with disability facing multiple barriers to employment, which restricts economic participation and independence.**

We are pleased to see the State Government recently set a six percent disability employment target<sup>3</sup> in their workplaces, and we are equally interested to review the activities to meet this yearly benchmark.

Vision Australia has identified that in order to help create more employment opportunities for people with disability, workplaces must be accessible. For job seekers who are blind or have low vision, and all people with disability, inaccessible technology and equipment within the vast majority of workplaces is a major barrier to equal access to employment.

<sup>2</sup> [afdo.org.au](http://afdo.org.au)

<sup>3</sup> [statedisabilityplan.vic.gov.au/every-opportunity](http://statedisabilityplan.vic.gov.au/every-opportunity)

**Employees without disability are provided, by default, the equipment they need to do their jobs, however, the same provisions are not always offered to employees with disability.**

**Accessible equipment must be in workplaces from procurement stage, as it is often impossible to retro fit ICT to make it accessible.**

**AS EN 301 549 is the standard that exists to guide the procurement of accessible information and communications technology ICT, but currently it is not enforced within the Victorian Public Service (VPS).**

### **Vision Australia call on the next Victorian Government to:**

Follow in the footsteps of NSW by mandating, promoting and monitoring AS EN 301 549, the standard that exists to guide the procurement of accessible information and communications technology ICT, within the VPS. We seek a mandate within the first year of government; and

Allocate two positions per annum, within VPS graduate roles, open only to people who are blind or have low vision. This affirmative action measure would offer much needed work experience opportunities for people who are blind or have low vision. Vision Australia has job ready candidates to fill positions.

### **Return on investment:**

Real steps towards achieving the six percent employment target and reducing the alarmingly high unemployment rate of people with disability; and

Government regarded as the leader in enforcing accessibility standards, setting the expectations for employers across our state and the remaining states.



# NDIS & Sector Development

**The NDIS is at a crucial juncture in Victoria: approaching full rollout, yet with lower than expected uptake by people with disability.**

**There are serious pressures on the NDIS plan quality, workforce supply, and provider readiness; creating a high risk of poor participant outcomes and the potential loss of access to service through market failure.**

This includes challenges to deliver services for low incidence cohorts such as blind and low vision participants across regional and rural Victoria, who at present make up two percent of the NDIS market.

The Federal Government has continued a limited level of sector development support through the Jobs and Market Fund. Additional support is needed to ensure Victorians with disability are not disadvantaged by the growing challenges of the NDIS.

**“ Additional support is needed to ensure Victorians with disability are not disadvantaged ”**



Ashleigh, Vision Australia client and Humphrey, Seeing Eye Dog



**Sarah, Vision Australia client**

### **Vision Australia call on the next Victorian Government to:**

- Provide targeted funding to support Victorian workforce development and service provision in regional and rural areas, accounting for low incidence cohorts of disability;
- Increase funding by 20 percent for sector support and development to disability providers, to manage the transition from current disability funding to the NDIS, and retain the program through to 2022; and
- Target additional investment into mainstream systems to support their interface with the NDIS to prevent participants falling into gaps between services.

### **Return on investment:**

- Improved outcomes for Victorian participants under the NDIS;
- Continued access to critical supports for Victorians with a disability; and
- Upfront investment in provider development will reduce long term costs and risk of market failure.



# Independent Travel



Jim, Vision Australia employee

**People who are blind or have low vision cannot drive and rely on public and point to point transport to travel independently. Commercial passenger vehicles such as taxis and Uber are the equivalent to independent point to point transport for people who are blind or have low vision.**

The majority of Victorians who are blind or have low vision make use of the Multi Purpose Taxi Program (MPTP) fare subsidy.

The MPTP can be used in Victorian taxis and covers 50 percent of the travel cost per trip.

The MPTP fare subsidy makes the cost of taxis more manageable for people who are blind or have low vision. It has been suggested that NDIS participants may become ineligible for the MPTP in Victoria once they access the scheme.

While NDIS packages can include funding for travel, Victorians must not be worse off under NDIS funding because they become ineligible for the MPTP.

The MPTP card must be extended across all forms of point to point transport to ensure that people with disability are able to utilise the benefits that the newer point to point transport options, such as Uber, offer.



## Bus & train announcements:

Public transport is frequently used by people who are blind or have low vision to travel to work, school, medical appointments and social occasions. They rely heavily on public transport audio announcements to navigate. However, buses in Victoria do not have audio announcements making bus travel a more stressful and risky transport option than trains.

Without audio announcements in buses, people who are blind or have low vision face the constant risk of overshooting their stop, potentially leading to rushed, unsafe attempts to exit the bus or getting off the

bus at the wrong stop and finding themselves stranded in unfamiliar surrounds. The lack of audio announcements on Victorian buses is exposing people who are blind or have low vision to unnecessary risk and this must be resolved.

While train services in Victoria do offer audible announcements, they are not consistently clear, accurate or timely. Inconsistencies in train announcements affects travellers who are blind or have low vision in many ways including increasing the risk of injury as they are forced to rush due to late or unclear announcements.

## Vision Australia call on the next Victorian Government:

- Ensure equal access to transport through the extension of the Multi Purpose Taxi Program fare subsidy across all ridesharing services including Uber;
- Ensure all NDIS participants are not worse off for travel funding after they enter the NDIS by committing to keeping the Multi Purpose Taxi Program;
- Introduce clear, audible and consistent bus announcements; and
- Ensure all train announcements are clear, audible and consistent.

## Return on investment:

- Ability for everyone to contribute to the economy through access to employment, shops, entertainment and holidays;
- Less likelihood of mental health conditions such as depression due to social isolation; and
- Reduction in customer service complaints and reports to the Disability Discrimination Commission.

## Contact

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