

Low vision services



What are low vision services?

There are approximately 180,000 people living in Australia with severe vision impairment. With the ageing population this number is expected to double by 2024. Low vision services are provided by low vision organisations, some optometrists and ophthalmologists. These services assist people to make the most of their available vision and adjust to vision impairment by learning new ways to carry out everyday tasks.

What do low vision service providers do?

Low vision service providers should be consulted when a person's vision is impaired, particularly when medical or surgical treatment and glasses are no longer satisfactory. It is important that a person seeks assistance from low vision services at an early stage when their sight begins to deteriorate. This can assist the person to use the devices and services available most effectively. Low vision services advise clients on ways to continue living independently, safely and confidently in their home and community. Most importantly, low vision services help people to continue leading happy and fulfilling lives.

How can these services help?

Low vision services can help by providing information, devices and rehabilitation to assist a person with vision impairment to remain independent. For example, they can help improve lighting and recommend products such as tactile markers for ovens or microwaves, large print numbers on telephones or magnifiers for reading and hobbies. These products and services make everyday tasks possible for people with vision impairment. Other services include practical assistance to enhance orientation and mobility. Training and assistance aims to help people with vision impairment move about safely. Counselling, peer support and group program activities are also available.

Low vision services in the community

It is vital that people with a vision impairment keep active and continue to access services in their local community. Low vision service providers help people find ways to continue taking part in their favourite recreational activities. Some organisations also provide day activity programs for people with vision impairment which offer social, creative and cultural interaction.

Referring to low vision services

Below are brief descriptions of low vision services that support people with a vision impairment. People who are receiving assistance from these organisations will still need regular appointments with their eye health professional. People do not need referrals to access these services.

Australian College of Optometry

Formerly the Victorian College of Optometry, low vision clinics are run in partnership with Vision Australia.

For more information visit www.aco.org.au or call the Australian College of Optometry on (03) 9349 7400.

Guide Dogs Australia

Guide Dogs Australia represents all of Australia's state based guide dog organisations. They assist people who are blind or have a vision impairment to gain the freedom and independence to move safely and confidently within the community.

For more information visit www.guidedogsaustralia.com or call Guide Dogs Australia on 1800 804 805.

Optometrists Association Australia

The Optometrists Association Australia can provide information on local optometrists that provide low vision services.

For more information visit www.optometrists.asn.au

Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children

The Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children provide educational services to children with hearing and/or vision impairment.

For more information visit www.ridbc.org.au or call the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children on (02) 9871 1233.

Royal Society for the Blind of South Australia

The Royal Society for the Blind of South Australia provides services for South Australians who have vision impairment.

For more information visit www.rsb.org.au or call the Royal Society for the Blind of South Australia on (08) 8232 4777.

Vision Australia

Vision Australia offers a wide range of services to assist people who are vision impaired across their life span.

Vision Australia has merged with Seeing Eye Dogs Australia to provide enhanced orientation and mobility services.

For more information visit www.visionaustralia.org.au or call Vision Australia on 1300 847 466.

Vision loss support organisations

Vision loss support organisations provide support and information for people living with vision impairment and blindness.

- Blind Citizens Australia 1800 033 066
www.bca.org.au
- Glaucoma Australia 1800 500 880
www.glaucoma.org.au
- Keratoconus Australia 0409 644 811
www.keratoconus.asn.au
- Macular Degeneration Foundation 1800 111 709
www.mdfoundation.com.au
- Retina Australia 1800 999 870
www.retinaaustralia.com.au

For more information on eye health visit www.visioninitiative.org.au