

Low Vision

A GUIDE



Our focus is your vision

Macular Disease Foundation Australia

Macular Disease Foundation Australia is a charity with a mission to reduce the incidence and impact of macular disease in Australia. The Foundation is committed to working on behalf of the macular disease community through awareness, education, client services, research and representation.

Macular disease, including macular degeneration, is the leading cause of blindness* and severe vision loss in Australia. The Foundation funds world leading research into macular degeneration, its prevention and treatment and ultimately seeks to find a cure for this chronic disease.

As a charity, the Foundation relies upon donations, bequests and fundraising efforts to support its work. If you would like to donate to support the Foundation or its research grants program, or arrange for a bequest, please contact the Foundation.

For further information, support and guidance, or to register to receive newsletters and invitations to national education sessions or other events please contact the Foundation.

Macular Disease Foundation Australia

Helpline: 1800 111 709

E: info@mdfoundation.com.au

W: www.mdfoundation.com.au

Resources Available

The Foundation has developed a comprehensive range of publications and resources. Contact the Foundation for a free information kit to help better understand macular degeneration, or other macular diseases, and to learn more about living well with low vision.



*Legal blindness

Introduction

Low Vision - A Guide provides information on relevant low vision agencies and support services.

This guide answers some key questions often asked by people with low vision, their families and friends. It also provides a helpful directory of services and contact details.

It is designed for people of all ages who seek a practical tool in navigating the low vision journey with the end goal of maintaining independence and quality of life.

People with low vision do have challenges and may face difficult choices regardless of the age at which they lose sight.

Attitude, perseverance and the ability to seek help and support has enabled many people to fulfil their aspirations and to maintain quality of life and independence in their work, home and social settings.

This guide can be used to help achieve these goals.

An Easy Reference Service Guide begins on page 18.

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What is ‘Low Vision’?

A person is said to have low vision when their eyesight is limited or impaired and cannot be adequately corrected with surgery, conventional glasses or contact lenses.

Low vision can affect people of all ages and has an impact on many aspects of a person's life, both at home and in the workplace. It may cause problems with reading and using the computer, dialling the telephone, watching TV, recognising faces and daily living activities such as cooking.

Low vision is often a loss of sharpness or acuity but may also present as a loss of field of vision, light sensitivity, distorted vision or a loss of contrast. It may occur as a result of birth defects, injury, a condition or disease.

Isn't Loss of Vision Just Getting Old?

Loss of vision is not just a natural consequence of getting older.

As we age our bodies change, including our eyes. However, these changes don't generally result in having low vision. In some eye diseases the symptoms can be wrongly interpreted as decreasing vision as a result of ageing.

The primary causes of vision loss are eye disease and health conditions. Learning how to make the best use of remaining vision and learning how to adapt to the new circumstance with a positive approach can certainly help to achieve good outcomes.

What About the Younger Years?

Although vision loss is generally associated with older people, younger adults and children may also have eye conditions and injuries that result in low vision.

A younger or middle aged person having vision loss can be presented with particular challenges. These can be at work, in education and social settings and in the home. Low vision services are essential in helping the individual and their family, carers and friends to cope with the existing challenges.

Just Diagnosed?

It takes time to adjust to new circumstances and vision loss is no exception. Many people experience different feelings of disbelief, apprehension and even depression. What may seem an insurmountable difficulty for someone newly experiencing vision loss can become just another element of daily life with some slight adjustments to everyday activities.

So what are the first steps for someone diagnosed with a problem resulting in low vision?

When Diagnosed:

1. **Don't make any quick decisions regarding current employment, activities, future plans or lifestyle.**
2. **Seek advice from all available sources. This guide provides a list of organisations which provide such advice.**
3. **Take a deep breath, pause and take time to calmly sort out the pathway that will lead to the best outcomes.**
4. **Stay engaged with social and recreational networks, especially if recently diagnosed. This is when networks may be at greater risk of breaking down.**

If after diagnosis there is any sign of withdrawal, anxiety or depression then it is very important to seek help immediately from a local doctor. There is support and help available.

Tips for the newly diagnosed include:

- Talking through the diagnosis with friends and family
- Keeping active
- Learning new skills and adapting old ones to new circumstances
- Giving friends hints about how they can be of practical assistance
- Maintaining existing social activities and seeking support from peers and friends
- Exploring new options for friends and fun
- Linking with peer support groups

“One of the most difficult things about being diagnosed was the uncertainty. How much vision would I lose and how long would it take? I made some decisions about life and work that were probably more reactive than positive. Since then I think I've learnt that I'm in control. I'm vision-impaired, not life-impaired.”*

Now What?

Moving Forward with Vision Loss

Moving forward starts with taking control of the situation. The more a person knows about their condition, its effects and options for dealing with the challenges presented by low vision, the less helpless they will feel. A good start is talking to eye care professionals about individual concerns and needs.

People with vision loss have different eye diseases or conditions with varying effects. Therefore it is important to pursue what is available in the form of rehabilitation and other support services, aids and equipment that will cater to individual requirements.

Take Control

○ Obtain a Low Vision Assessment

A complete low vision assessment is essential in finding the best aid or strategy for individual needs. The assessment includes tests for the amount of vision remaining to determine what best suits the individual's requirements. The assessment will help the person with low vision to gain a better understanding of vision impairment and how to make the most of remaining sight.

Advice will be provided about possible aids and appliances, using magnification and lighting to assist with activities like reading, writing and recreation. This will help to realise maximum vision potential.

A low vision assessment is a great way to get started and regain control. Low vision assessments can be done at low vision clinics. A few major hospitals and universities also run low vision clinics. Optometrists also undertake low vision assessments, however first check that the optometrist provides this service.

For a list of providers of low vision assessments refer to the 'Easy Reference Service Guide' beginning on page 18.

○ Seek Guidance, Advice and Support

Low vision services can provide advice, help, information and solutions for managing everyday tasks. Most services also provide support and assistance through individual counselling and group programs.

Support groups can provide a friendly atmosphere in which to share personal experiences with people facing similar situations.

Low vision services can provide equipment solutions and practical assistance. This includes orientation and mobility training to learn how to confidently navigate

around the neighbourhood or to and from work.

Individuals may require specific visual devices and training to match individual needs. Many people require more than one device and some need home and work modifications.

“My local association for the blind was great. An occupational therapist came out to my home and gave me lots of handy hints about ways to deal with things I was finding difficult. Simple things that mean I am less likely to cut or burn myself while preparing dinner.”*

To contact agencies who provide guidance, advice and support refer to the ‘Easy Reference Service Guide’ beginning on page 18.

○ Find out about Vision Aids and Adaptive Technology



We’ve already identified that people who have recently lost vision often need to regain a sense of control. One important way to do this is through accessing devices that help maintain independence.

There are many resources available to provide assistance. Practical aids and appliances that are of immediate assistance can be obtained from low vision organisations.

Daily living aids, such as liquid level indicators, coin sorters and talking clocks and watches are available to assist people with daily activities.

“I have trouble working out whether those round gold coins are \$1 or \$2. Thank heavens for the coin sorter which keeps them organised and makes it obvious which is which.”*

Optical magnifiers, electronic note takers, pocket-size telescopes and adjustable lamps can help with reading and writing. Such devices can assist with a range of daily tasks from reading labels in supermarkets and restoring independence in grocery shopping to filling out official forms.

Technology is changing rapidly and enabling access to many activities previously inaccessible to vision impaired people. Electronic magnification units (commonly called CCTVs) can enlarge text onto a screen with a high level of magnification. Software for computers is available which can enlarge icons and text on the screen and provide speech options. There are also new and exciting technological advances which enable immediate access to books and newspapers in the spoken word.

“Computers make such a difference. The contrast is great, I can read more on screen than printed text and sometimes it even reads to me. More importantly, through the internet I can find out information about my condition and share experiences with a whole community of people who have been or are going through the same sorts of things as me.”*

To contact providers of Aids and Adaptive Technology refer to the ‘Easy Reference Service Guide’ and the ‘Private Providers’ sections on pages 18 to 28.

Remain In Control

○ Keep informed



The visit to the eye care professional

It can be confusing and upsetting when diagnosed with an eye disease and when dealing with low vision. In these situations it is sometimes difficult to remember what is being said by the doctor, ophthalmologist or optometrist at the time of consultation.

The following tips can help obtain the maximum benefit from the visit to the eye care professional:

- If there is a feeling of not fully understanding what was said, it is fine to ring back after the visit and ask questions
- At subsequent consultations:
 - take notes
 - get a friend or family member to also attend
 - ask the friend or family member to take notes and be available later for discussion
 - ask the eye care professional to write down instructions
 - request further information if still in doubt
 - find out if printed information is available
 - ring a relevant support service such as the Macular Disease Foundation Australia

The visit to the low vision service

The following questions can help obtain the maximum benefit from the visit to the low vision service:

- What impact could there be on lifestyle due to low vision?
- Are there any specific devices, aids, lighting and resources that will be of help in the home, work and social situations?
- Is any training required for aids and technology and how can this service be accessed?
- What other support is available?
- Are there any self-help or peer support groups?

In summary

- Clear communication will help maintain a good working partnership between the person with low vision, their eye care professional and their low vision service provider.
- The person with low vision and their family and friends are in the best position to advocate for support. It is important to investigate with persistence, ask questions which are of concern and obtain information that gives satisfaction.

Adopt Coping Strategies

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- **A number of strategies can help overcome the challenges of low vision**



These include:

- Staying positive and setting realistic goals
- Adjusting and actively learning new skills and feeling empowered through accomplishment
- Keeping things in perspective
- Accepting limitations and not being too demanding of oneself
- Actively seeking support from others
- Adopting a 'can do' attitude.

-
- **People with low vision, especially those recently diagnosed, may need help to:**



- Source aids and obtain skills training
- Stay engaged with their communities

Occasionally some people may become depressed or anxious and may need professional counselling and/or peer support. Professional medical help and advice should be sought immediately if there are any concerns.

Low Vision Tips

There are simple practical things that can be done to improve the environment for the individual with low vision, thus enhancing their capacity to continue and maintain active daily living.

Adding additional light for specific tasks can make a big difference in how well a person can see. Direct lighting from behind will reduce glare. Some types of light will work better than others for individuals with different eye conditions. Low vision clinics and information services are good starting points for more information on lighting options.

Getting organised is an important part of maintaining independence. Always keep things in the same place.

Modifying everyday items such as using large print, contrasting colours and tactile markings all help to make it easier for people with vision loss to live independently.

Basic tips include:

- **Improve Lighting:**

Use direct lighting from behind. Make sure stairs, bathrooms, kitchens and other areas of activity are well lit.

- **Increase Contrast:**

Pour coffee into white cups and put white plates on dark place mats. Use a felt-tip pen, not a ball point. Have a dark chopping board and a light one. Chop dark items (eg steak) on the light board and light items (eg onion) on the dark board.

- **Control Glare:**

Wear sunglass fitters or clip-ons and a visor outside. Cover shiny surfaces with a cloth.

- **Enlarge:**

Get large-size cheques from your bank. Copy and enlarge recipes, addresses, sheet music and menus from favourite restaurants. Use the accessibility features on computers or purchase enlargement software.

- **Label:**

Use bright, contrasting labels, dark felt pens and raised tactile paint on dials, remotes and domestic appliances.

- **Organise and Think Ahead:**

Thinking ahead can make a big difference for those with low vision. For example, restaurants are often dimly lit and menus written in small print. Rather than asking fellow diners to read out the menu, contact the restaurant beforehand and ask them to fax or email a copy in advance. If travelling, get forms before leaving and fill them out in the well-lit comfort of home.

“One of the first things I learned was to sit with my back to the window in meetings or when talking to friends. At least that way I have a better chance of seeing who I’m talking to.”*

Understanding Orientation and Mobility

The aim of orientation and mobility services is to enable people to maintain, regain and enhance independent mobility. Not everyone needs these services, however, there is great benefit for those who choose to utilise them.

Orientation and mobility training helps those with low vision to move around safely, confidently and independently within their surroundings, whether it is in the home, the office or while out and about. Programs are tailored to meet individual needs and may include the use of mobility aids.

Problems which may be experienced as a result of vision loss include:

- Loss of depth perception: making it difficult to identify if a step is high or low
- Loss of contrast sensitivity: making it hard to see curbs or steps, or not being able to differentiate between a puddle or a hole in the pavement
- Colour or distance problems: making it difficult to determine if the walk signal is on or off; or to determine the writing on street signs
- Seeing spots that block central vision: making it hard to identify landmarks or detect obstacles
- Loss of visual field: making it difficult to easily move around due to restricted peripheral vision
- Inability to see and identify faces: making communication difficult and possibly confusing

Orientation and Mobility Tips

Around the home

- Place a contrasting and non-slip strip on the front edge of steps making them easier to see. This can reduce the risk of falls, particularly if the strip is right on the edge of the tread and about 50mm or 2 inches wide
- Place a chair near the back door so when entering from outside there is somewhere to wait until the eyes adjust to the changed lighting conditions
- Keep cupboard doors and drawers closed at all times, and put away items in the same place each time
- Mark door handles and steps with reflective tape
- Be aware of stairs, steps and changes in levels

In the Kitchen

- Ensure that the kitchen is well lit
- If possible, use dishes and cookware in a colour that contrasts with the countertop
- Replace electrical outlet covers in a colour that contrasts with the wall
- Outline counter edges and electrical outlets with wide tape of a contrasting colour
- If the stove surface is a light colour, consider replacing stainless steel pots and pans with dark-coloured ones
- Use light-coloured dishes on a dark tablecloth, or vice versa
- Mark frequently used settings on the oven or other dials with adhesive tactile labels such as velcro
- Re-label jars and canned goods using a thick black marker and index cards, which can be reused
- Remove small throw rugs from the kitchen. They are not easily seen and may be a tripping hazard
- Keep cupboard doors and drawers closed at all times, and put away items in same place each time
- Use the clock method to identify where certain foods are located on a plate. For example, “The rice is at three o’clock and the beans are at seven o’clock”

In the Bathroom

- Use illuminated and magnifying mirrors in the bathroom
- Use coloured toothpaste so it shows more on the white bristles of a toothbrush
- Put the toothpaste on your finger and then apply it to the toothbrush

- Use towels that contrast in colour with the bathroom décor
- Use a rubber-backed mat in the tub
- Float a brightly coloured sponge while running the bath water, as the sponge will indicate how high the water has risen
- Label current medication with a thick black letter on each bottle
- Use a large print pill box
- Pick up the bath mat after each use and fold it over the edge of the tub to prevent tripping

Travelling Independently

The support and guidance of a mobility specialist can assist in the process of independent travel. Some people who are blind or who have low vision will be more open to the idea of independent travel than others. For those who need a period of adjustment, support from a carer in organising travel can be an excellent and practical option.

When out and about

- Choose well lit routes to travel
- Find alternate routes around dangerous intersections and construction areas
- Use curbing or line up streetlights as a guide
- Be aware of contrast on sidewalks
- Wherever possible, take the elevator to avoid stairs
- If available, use hand railings when using stairs
- Try to cross the road where you can see and be seen
- Where possible, cross at the traffic lights
- Be aware of cars pulling into driveways
- Identify coins by touch and fold paper money. Also try separating the paper money into different sections of the wallet
- Take a moment to let the eyes adjust when switching from a bright environment to a dimly lit one
- Carry a magnifier and/or penlight to read labels, price tags, elevator buttons, or directions
- Use a mini tape recorder to make a shopping list, instead of struggling with a handwritten list
- Use large-print cheques and writing guides to make signing easier

Using public transport

- Plan ahead and allow ample time to travel
- Get organised before the bus arrives, so that money and bus passes are easily accessible
- Ask the driver to wait until you are seated before they start driving
- Tell the bus driver in advance which stop you require
- Sit at the front of the bus and near the door

Lifestyles and Hobbies

People with low vision often say that they cannot recognise people in the street. This can cause embarrassment in social situations, because they cannot see facial expressions or features. For this reason, some people with vision loss avoid social interaction.

Being accompanied by a friend or companion, who can make the initial introductions, is worth considering. It may be easier for the friend to explain to people that smiles and waves cannot be seen and to encourage speakers to identify themselves when talking.

- Low vision aids and adaptive technology can make a difference with reading and everyday activities.
- Activities such as reading or playing a musical instrument can continue with a little patience and adjustment. Sheet music can be enlarged using a photocopier
- Large-print crossword puzzles and playing cards are available for those who enjoy these activities.
- Sports enthusiasts can also rethink exercise programs. Walking with a friend instead of alone and using a local walking track or local oval for longer distance exercise can also be an option. Stationary bikes and other seated equipment in most gyms and fitness clubs are also an excellent way of staying active.

The changes in one's lifestyle that may be necessary because of low vision require flexibility and patience. It can be challenging to change an old hobby or sport.

The important thing is to keep positive and seek help if required. Following the simple tips listed above will help in staying active while maintaining quality of life and independence.

Where to next:

To contact agencies who provide orientation and mobility training, refer to the 'Easy Reference Service Guide' beginning on page 18.

Thanks to Guide Dogs NSW/ACT and Lighthouse International in compiling this section of the Guide.

“I was diagnosed with macular degeneration at 39 years of age. I sought professional help and looked at what I could do, not what I couldn’t do. I believe a ‘can do’ attitude will improve your quality of life.”

Barry Clarke

Accountant & Company Director

Understanding Depression

Many adults and young people live with depression every year. Depression can occur when a person has a newly diagnosed disease. Studies have shown that people who have macular degeneration experience depression at the same rate as people with cancer and heart disease. Understanding that there may be a risk of depression when a person experiences low vision is essential because early detection is important.

What is depression?

Depression is more than just a low mood, it is a serious illness. People with depression can find it hard to function every day. Depression can have serious effects on physical and mental health.



What is the difference between depressed and just sad?

A person may be depressed, if **for more than two weeks** they have:

- felt sad, down or miserable most of the time

OR

- lost interest or pleasure in most of their usual activities

AND

- experienced symptoms in at least three of the following categories:

1. Behaviours ○ Stop going out ○ Withdraw from close family and friends ○ No longer do things they enjoy ○ Don't get things done at work ○ Rely on alcohol and sedatives ○ Unable to concentrate	3. Feelings ○ Overwhelmed ○ Guilty ○ Irritable ○ Frustrated ○ No confidence ○ Unhappy ○ Indecisive ○ Disappointed ○ Miserable ○ Sad
2. Thoughts ○ "I'm a failure." ○ "Nothing good ever happens to me." ○ "Life's not worth living." ○ "It's my fault." ○ "I'm worthless."	4. Physical ○ Tired all the time ○ Sick and run down ○ Headaches and muscle pains ○ Churning gut ○ Sleep problems ○ Loss or change of appetite ○ Significant weight loss or gain

Everyone experiences some or all of these symptoms from time to time, but when symptoms are severe and lasting, it is important to get professional help.

**Depression is treatable and effective treatments are available.
Early detection is important.**

What about older people and depression?

Depression may occur for different reasons in older people. The onset of a physical illness or personal loss and sadness can be common, but depression is not a normal part of ageing.

There are also certain factors that make older people more at risk of depression:

- An increase in physical health problems
- Chronic pain
- Loss of relationships, independence, work and income, self-worth, mobility and flexibility
- Social isolation
- Significant change in living arrangements eg. moving from an independent care setting
- Admission to hospital
- Particular anniversaries and the memories they may evoke

Is depression treatable?

Different types of depression require different types of treatment. Treatments may include physical exercise for preventing and treating mild depression or psychological treatment and drug treatments for more severe levels of depression. Community support can also play an important role in treatment of depression.

What can you do?

Depression must be recognised in order to be treated. The key to successful treatment is an appropriate assessment by a GP or health professional. Both personal and professional carers are an invaluable source of information about personality or cognitive changes in a person with depression and should be included in discussions where possible.

If you think you or someone you care about could be experiencing depression, talk to your doctor. In an emergency, you can contact Lifeline on 13 11 14 for assistance.

What can family, friends and carers do?

- Suggest the person sees a doctor or health professional
- Offer practical support by assisting the person to make an appointment and either provide or arrange transport
- Offer assistance at the person's home
- If someone has been prescribed antidepressant medication, encourage the person to continue taking it as directed and assist them to discuss the treatment with their doctor
- If the person complains of side-effects from the medication, encourage them to discuss these with their doctor

Macular Disease Foundation Australia acknowledges beyondblue for providing the above information.

For more information on depression, anxiety, available treatments and where to get help, go to www.beyondblue.org.au or call the beyondblue information line on 1300 22 4636 (local call cost).

“I was diagnosed at an early age with Stargardt’s disease. Losing your vision is devastating, but living with low vision doesn’t need to be. Macular Disease Foundation Australia and other community agencies can help you find the tools you need to survive and thrive.”*



Causes of Vision Loss

The major forms of eye disease and conditions are macular degeneration, retinitis pigmentosa and other retinal dystrophies, glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy and cataract.

Associated Foundations and Organisations

Several organisations provide information, support and advice in relation to specific diseases and conditions. **If you are diagnosed with one of these diseases please call the associated organisation.**

Macular Disease Foundation Australia

Phone: 1800 111 709
Address: Suite 902, Level 9
447 Kent Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000
Website: www.mdfoundation.com.au
Email: info@mdfoundation.com.au

Genetic Eye Foundation

Phone: (02) 9382 2493
Address: Department of Ophthalmology
Prince of Wales Hospital
2 St Pauls Street
RANDWICK NSW 2031
Website: www.gef.org.au
Email: enquiries@gef.org.au

Diabetes Australia

Phone: 1300 136 588
Address: PO Box 3156
CANBERRA ACT 2601
Website: www.diabetesaustralia.com.au
Email: admin@diabetesaustralia.com.au

Glaucoma Australia

Phone: 1800 500 880
Address: PO Box 420
CROWS NEST NSW 1585
Website: www.glaucoma.org.au
Email: glaucoma@glaucoma.org.au

Retina Australia

Phone: 1800 999 870
Address: 28 Station Street
THORNLEIGH NSW 2120
Website: www.retinaaustralia.com.au
Email: adminl@retinaaustralia.com.au

Stargardt's Australia

Website: www.stargardts-au.org
Email: info@stargardts-au.org

Easy Reference Service Guide

Organisation	Low Vision Assessment	Optical Magnifiers
Australian Capital Territory		
Guide Dogs NSW/ACT	Yes	-
The Royal Society for the Blind (Canberra)	Yes	Yes
Vision Australia	Yes	Yes
New South Wales		
Guide Dogs NSW/ACT	Yes	Yes
The Royal Society for the Blind (Hunter region)	Yes	Yes
University of NSW School of Optometry	Yes	Yes
Vision Australia	Yes	Yes
Queensland		
Guide Dogs Queensland	Yes	-
Queensland Blind Association Inc	-	Yes
Queensland University of Technology	Yes	Yes
Vision Australia	Yes	Yes

	Daily Living Aids	Orientation & Mobility Training	Information & Helpline	Adaptive Technology
	-	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	-	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Yes	-	Yes	Yes
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	-	Yes	Yes	-
	Yes	-	Yes	Yes
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Yes	-	Yes	Yes

Easy Reference Service Guide continued

Organisation	Low Vision Assessment	Optical Magnifiers
South Australia		
Guide Dogs SA/NT	-	Yes
The Royal Society for the Blind (RSB)	Yes	Yes
Tasmania		
Lions Low Vision Clinic	Yes	Yes
Guide Dogs Tasmania	Yes	Yes
Victoria		
Guide Dogs Victoria	Yes	Yes
Vision Australia	Yes	Yes
Victorian College of Optometry	Yes	Yes
Western Australia		
VisAbility (formerly Association for the Blind of WA)	Yes	Yes
Northern Territory		
Guide Dogs SA/NT	Yes	Yes

	Daily Living Aids	Orientation & Mobility Training	Information & Helpline	Adaptive Technology
	Yes	Yes	Yes	-
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Yes	-	Yes	Yes
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Yes	Yes	Yes	-
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	-	-	-	-
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Please Note: Information on services provided by each agency listed in the Easy Reference Service Guide is self reported. All efforts have been made by Macular Disease Foundation Australia to verify the accuracy of the information with the service provider.

National - Service Directory

My Aged Care

Phone: 1800 200 422

Website: www.myagedcare.gov.au

National Disability Insurance Scheme

Phone: 1800 800 110

Website: www.ndis.gov.au

Australian Local Government Association

Phone: (02) 6122 9400

Address: 8 Geils Court
DEAKIN ACT 2600

Website: www.alga.asn.au

Lifeline Australia

Phone: 131 114

Website: www.lifeline.org.au

Email: national@lifeline.org.au

Vision Australia Library and Information Service

Phone: 1300 654 656

Address: 454 Glenferrie Road
KOOYONG VIC 3144

Website: www.visionaustralia.org

Email: library@visionaustralia.org

Centrelink

Age pension: 132 300

Disability pension: 132 717

Website: www.humanservices.gov.au

Optometry Australia

Phone: (03) 9668 8500

Website: www.optometry.org.au

Email: national@optometry.org.au

Department of Veterans' Affairs

Phone: 133 254

Website: www.dva.gov.au

Email: generalenquiries@dva.gov.au

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists

Phone: (02) 9690 1001

Address: 94-98 Chalmers Street
SURRY HILLS NSW 2010

Website: www.ranzco.edu

Email: ranzco@ranzco.edu

Beyond Blue

Phone: 1300 224 636

Address: PO Box 6100
HAWTHORN VIC 3122

Website: www.beyondblue.org.au

Email: info@beyondblue.org.au

depressionNet

Website: www.depressionnet.org.au

Job Access

Phone: 1800 464 800

Website: www.jobaccess.gov.au

Lions Visual Independence Foundation

Phone: **1 300 787 469**
Address: PO Box 658
 ELTHAM VIC 3095
Website: www.visualindependence.org.au
Email: info@visualindependence.org.au

Orthoptics Australia

Phone: **(03) 9857 9390**
Address: PO Box 1104
 GREYTHORN VIC 3104
Website: www.orthoptics.org.au
Email: office@orthoptics.org.au

Australian Capital Territory - Service Directory

The Royal Society for the Blind (Canberra)

Phone: **(02) 6247 4580**
Address: Room G06, Griffin Centre
 20 Genge Street
 CANBERRA CITY ACT 2601
Website: www.rsb.org.au
Email: rsbcanberra@rsb.org.au

1RPH Canberra 1125am

Phone: **(02) 6241 4076**
Website: www.radio1rph.org.au
Email: admin@radio1rph.org.au

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT

Phone: **(02) 6285 2988**
Address: Unit 11,
 40-42 Corinna Street
 PHILLIP ACT 2606
Website: guidedogs.com.au
Email: canberra@guidedogs.com.au

Vision Australia

Phone: **1300 847 466**
Address: Suite 1A,
 3 Sydney Avenue
 BARTON ACT 2600
Website: www.visionaustralia.org
Email: info@visionaustralia.org

New South Wales - Service Directory

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT

Phone: 1800 804 805
(02) 9412 9300
Address: 2-4 Thomas Street
CHATSWOOD NSW 2067
Website: www.guidedogs.com.au

2RPH Sydney 1224am

Phone: (02) 9518 8811
Website: www.2rph.org.au
Email: 2rph@2rph.org.au

University of NSW School of Optometry

Phone: (02) 9385 4624
Address: Level 1, Rupert Myers Building
(North Wing), School of
Optometry and Vision Science
The University of NSW
Gate 14, Barker Street
KENSINGTON NSW 2033
Website: www.optom.unsw.edu.au
Email: optomclinic@unsw.edu.au

Centre for Eye Health

Phone: 1300 421 960
Address: Rupert Myers Building
(M15) South Wing
The University of NSW
Gate 14, Barker Street
KENSINGTON NSW 2033
Website: www.cfeh.com.au

Vision Australia

Phone: 1300 847 466
Address: 4 Mitchell Street
ENFIELD NSW 2136
Website: www.visionaustralia.org
Email: info@visionaustralia.org

The Royal Society for the Blind (Hunter region)

Phone: (02) 4088 4200
Address: 151 Lambton Road
BROADMEADOW NSW 2292
Website: www.rsb.org.au
Email: rsbhunter@rsb.org.au

Northern Territory - Service Directory

Guide Dogs SA/NT

Phone: (08) 8995 2222
Address: Shop 4, 5 Keith Lane
FANNIE BAY NT 0820
Website: www.guidedogs.org.au
Email: info@guidedogs.org.au

Queensland - Service Directory

Guide Dogs Queensland

Phone: 1800 810 122
Address: 1978 Gympie Road
BALD HILLS QLD 4036
Website: www.guidedogsqld.com.au
Email: admin@guidedogsqld.com.au

Queensland Blind Association

Phone: (07) 3848 8888
Address: 26 Warwick Street
ANNERLEY QLD 4103
Website: www.qba.asn.au
Email: qba@qba.asn.au

Queensland Narrating Service

Phone: (07) 3324 0004
Address: 373 Old Cleveland Road
COORPAROO QLD 4151
Website: www.qns.net.au
Email: qns@qns.net.au

Queensland University of Technology

Phone: (07) 3138 9777
Address: QUT Health Clinics -
44 Musk Avenue
KELVIN GROVE QLD 4059
Website: www.healthclinics.qut.edu.au
Email: healthclinics@qut.edu.au

4RPH Brisbane 1296am

Phone: (07) 3831 1296
Website: www.4rph.org.au
Email: radio4rphnews@uq.net.au

Vision Australia

Phone: 1300 847 466
Address: 373 Old Cleveland Road
COORPAROO QLD 4151
Website: www.visionaustralia.org
Email: info@visionaustralia.org

Greenslopes Private Hospital Low Vision Care Clinic

Phone: (07) 3394 7670
Address: Newdegate Street
GREENSLOPES QLD 4120
Website: www.greenslopesprivate.com.au
Email: enquirygph@ramsayhealth.com.au

South Australia - Service Directory

Guide Dogs SA/NT

Phone: (08) 8203 8333
Address: 251 Morphett Street
ADELAIDE SA 5000
Website: www.guidedogs.org.au
Email: info@guidedogs.org.au

5RPH Adelaide 1197am

Phone: (08) 8234 1197
Website: www.rphadelaide.org.au
Email: hans@rphadelaide.org.au

The Royal Society for the Blind (RSB) SA

Phone: (08) 8417 5599
1800 675 554
Address: Knapman House
230 Pirie Street
ADELAIDE SA 5000
Website: www.rsb.org.au
Email: mail@rsb.org.au

Tasmania - Service Directory

Guide Dogs Tasmania

Phone: (03) 6232 1222
Address: 164 Elizabeth Street
HOBART TAS 7000
Website: www.guidedogstas.com.au
Email: admin@guidedogstas.com.au

7RPH Hobart 864am

Phone: (03) 6224 1864
Website: www.7rph.org.au
Email: 7rph@tassie.net.au

Lions Low Vision Clinic

Phone: (03) 6222 8310
Address: Eye Clinic, RHH,
Cnr Argyle & Liverpool Sts
HOBART TAS 7000
Email: llvc@dhhs.tas.gov.au

Victoria - Service Directory

Guide Dogs Victoria

Phone: (03) 9854 4444
Address: Chandler Highway
KEW VIC 3101
Website: www.guidedogsvictoria.com.au
Email: referrals@guidedogsvictoria.com.au

Vision Australia

Phone: 1300 847 466
Address: 454 Glenferrie Road
KOOYONG VIC 3144
Website: www.visionaustralia.org
Email: info@visionaustralia.org

Vision Australia Radio 1179am

Phone: 1300 847 466
Website: www.visionaustralia.org
Email: var.melbourne@visionaustralia.org

Australian College of Optometry

Phone: (03) 9349 7400
Address: Cnr Keppel & Cardigan Street
CARLTON VIC 3053
Website: www.aco.org.au
Email: clinic@aco.org.au

Western Australia - Service Directory

VisAbility (formerly Association for the Blind of WA)

Phone: (08) 9311 8202
1800 847 466 (within WA)
Address: 61 Kitchener Avenue
VICTORIA PARK WA 6979
Website: www.guidedogswa.com.au
Email: info@guidedogswa.com.au

6RPH Perth 990am

Phone: (08) 9470 4966
Website: www.inforadio.com.au
Email: 6rph@inforadio.com.au

Private Providers of Adaptive Technology

Apple Computer

Accessibility Technologies

Website: www.apple.com/accessibility

Email: accessibility@apple.com

Audio-Read

Phone: (02) 9713 4070

Website: www.audio-read.com.au

Email: info@audio-read.com.au

Australian Independence Products

Phone: (03) 9946 5459

Website: www.ozindproducts.com.au

Email: gaethjo@micromarvellous.com.au

HumanWare

NSW: (02) 9686 2600

Website: www.humanware.com

Email: au.sales@humanware.com

IBM

Human Ability and Accessibility Center

Website: www.ibm.com/able

Microsoft

Guide for Individuals with Vision Impairment

Website:

www.microsoft.com/enable/guides/vision.aspx

Optek Systems

Phone: (02) 9680 0600

Website: www.opteksystems.com.au

Email: opteksystems@bigpond.com.au

Pacific Vision International (Australia)

NSW/ACT: 1800 756 849

Website: www.lowvision.com.au

Email: office@pacificvision.com.au

Quantum RLV

Phone: 1300 883 853

NSW: (02) 9479 3100

QLD: (07) 3831 4894

VIC: (03) 9545 4100

Website: www.quantumrlv.com.au

Email: info@quantumrlv.com.au

Spectronics

Phone: (07) 3808 6833

Website: www.spectronicsinoz.com

Email: mail@spectronicsinoz.com

Glossary

Adaptive Technology

Adaptive technology is the term used to describe devices that help people with low vision in the various activities of daily living. Some examples include software for computers to enlarge screen print size with audio and electronic magnification units such as closed circuit televisions.

Daily Living Aids

Daily living aids are practical tools designed to assist with daily activities including large print books, talking books, large-button phones, talking clocks, large TV remote controls and coin-sorters.

Low Vision Assessment

A low vision assessment involves testing for the amount of vision remaining to determine what assistance the individual requires. It helps the individual to gain better understanding of low vision and to make the most of remaining sight.

Optical Magnifiers

Optical magnifiers are devices with a glass lens to enlarge print. They come in many different forms. They can be hand-held, telescopic or on stands and some have built-in lights.

Eye Care Professionals

An eye care professional in this guide refers to ophthalmologists and optometrists.

Orientation and Mobility Training

Orientation and mobility training helps a person with low vision to move about independently, confidently and safely in the home, the local community and the workplace.

Ophthalmologist

An ophthalmologist is a medical doctor who has completed extra training in eyes. Ophthalmologists perform eye examinations, treat disease, prescribe medication and perform surgery. They may also write prescriptions for spectacles and contact lenses. Some ophthalmologists have further specialisation as a retinal specialist.

Optometrist

An optometrist performs eye examinations for both vision and health problems, prescribes spectacles and fits contact lenses. Some optometrists have further specialisation in low vision rehabilitation. They can detect eye diseases and refer patients to ophthalmologists for treatment.

Orthoptist

An orthoptist is an allied health professional who assists in the diagnosis and treatment of vision problems. An orthoptist may work in an ophthalmologist's surgery, a hospital, a community eye clinic or in a rehabilitation setting.

**These quotes are attributed to people living with low vision*

Low Vision

A GUIDE

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For further information and
support please contact:

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www.mdfoundation.com.au



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Our focus is your vision

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