

Contact your local Member of Parliament about audio description this election

The Federal Election in 2016 gives the blindness and low vision community the opportunity to keep audio description on the agenda. To make TV more accessible for the 350,000 Australians who are blind or have low vision, Vision Australia is calling for the provision of audio description on free-to-air television broadcasts. We will advocate on a systemic level but people sharing their personal perspective directly with their MPs is another important tool. Here's how you can take action.

Call, meet, write or email

The more MPs who know about this issue, the more willing they'll be to support it. You can share your story with a phone call, a meeting, a letter or an email to your local MP. You can find their contact details using your postcode [by searching for them on this website via the following link.](#)

Explain the issue and how it affects you by being assertive, but not aggressive. You also need a clear 'ask' or action you want them to take. We suggest you request that they support a legislated minimum of 14 hours of audio description per free-to-air channel a week. You can also share [Vision Australia's video on audio description to help them understand the issue.](#)

You might need to explain what blindness or low vision means, so they understand why audio description is important to you and your involvement in the community. A good analogy could be captioning for the deaf community.

Keep a record of your contact with your MP, make sure to follow up actions you said you would take, and consider writing a thank you letter to reinforce your talking points. Prepare before you contact your local MP by reading the Talking Points below.

Talking points

- People who are blind or have low vision watch TV too and they should be able to enjoy the same programs as fully sighted people.

- Audio description is a second audio track that can be turned on and off. It describes important visual elements of a television program being portrayed without dialogue – such as actions, scene changes, gestures and facial expressions. Without narration through audio description, a person who is blind or has low vision misses this critical and informative content.
- A Vision Australia survey suggests Australian Story, The Big Bang Theory and Home & Away are the most popular TV shows for blind and low vision viewers.
- Australia lags far behind the rest of the world in audio description. It has been available for some time in the UK, U.S., Germany, Spain and New Zealand. For example, Home & Away has audio description in the UK – but it's still not available here in Australia.
- Vision Australia is asking for legislation to ensure that there is a minimum of 14 hours of audio described content available per week on each free-to-air channel.
- Captioning has made TV much more accessible for people who are deaf or have a hearing impairment, and audio description has the potential to significantly improve access to Australia's cultural life for Australians who are blind or have low vision.

Most importantly, explain why audio description is important to you! You have the lived experience of blindness or low vision and are an expert in your needs. Sharing your story is the most powerful tool.

Let us know how you go

By discussing audio description and sharing your story with your MP, you'll help to put it on the election agenda. If you would like support please contact Vision Australia on 1300 84 7466 and ask to speak with an Advocacy Advisor, or email advocacy@visionaustralia.org. It would be great if you could let us know about your advocacy so that we can track which MPs are aware of the issue and how they respond.