Vision Australia logo 
Blindness. Low vision. Opportunity. 

**Vision Australia Submission: Voice of Queenslanders with Disability 2024**

Submission to: Dignity Project ([dignityproject@griffith.edu.au](mailto:dignityproject@griffith.edu.au))

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Submission approved by: Chris Edwards, Director Government Relations and Advocacy, NDIS and Aged Care, Vision Australia

# Introduction

# Achievements, challenges and ideas for improvement

## Jobs and money

**23A. What is going well for the members/clients of your organisation in relation to jobs and money?**

We support the maintenance of State based programs such as Skilling Queenslanders for Work, which provides specialist training and work placement for people who are blind or have low vision.

**23B. What is not going well for the members/clients of your organisation in relation to jobs and money?**

When developing plans, programs and policy for people with a disability it is important to note the high unemployment rate of people who are blind or have low vision, which has effectively remained unchanged over many years. Barriers to employment include:

* systemic negative employer attitudes;
* lack of a requirement within tenders to adopt an accessible Information and Communication Technology (ICT) procurement process; and
* lack of disability identified positions for people who are blind or have low vision,

**23C. What would improve the lives of the members/clients of your organisation in relation to jobs and money?**

Strategies that may improve the lives of clients who are blind or have low vision include:

* employer awareness of the value and importance of workers who are blind or have low vision, led by State government departments and agencies as employers;
* the requirement that all State Government departments and agencies implement accessible ICT procurement within tendering processes so that employees who are blind or have low vision using screen reading software and technology can have equal access to ICT systems; and
* the introduction of disability identified positions within Government departments and agencies for people who are blind or have low vision, at all levels of seniority.

## Inclusive places

**24A. What is going well for the members/clients of your organisation in relation to inclusive places?**

We appreciate the opportunity to represent Vision Australia on the Department of Transport and Main Roads e-mobility safety reference group and e-mobility parking reference groups.

**24B. What is not going well for the members/clients of your organisation in relation to inclusive places?**

A key barrier faced by people who are blind or have low vision is the prevalence of e-mobility devices, including e-scooters, which in the Queensland jurisdiction can be ridden on pedestrian footpaths and shared walkways. This hinders equal access to public spaces such as public footpaths, which can restrict safe entry to public spaces such as business establishments, health facilities, employment, education and social spaces such as cafes, restaurants, hotels and nightclubs. We appreciate that the speed limit for these vehicles has reduced from 25 kilometres per hour to 12 kilometres per hour however they still pose a safety risk and hazard for our clients. The silent nature of these vehicles means that people who are blind or have low vision cannot hear the vehicles coming on shared pathways and the erratic nature of some of the driving puts them at physical risk of injury. Another issue is that the e-scooters are discarded across footpaths and shared walkways and become an obstacle and fall risk for our clients.

**24C. What would improve the lives of the members/clients of your organisation in relation to inclusive places?**

A potential improvement would be an expansion of geofenced zones for shared e-scooter schemes, to prevent them from driving on heavily travelled pedestrian areas, however this would not address the increasing prevalence of private e-scooters which are also driven on public footpaths and shared walkways. A preferred option would be that e-mobility devices such as e-scooters do not share footpaths or walkways with pedestrians.

## Safety and rights

**25A. What is going well for the members/clients of your organisation in relation to** **safety and rights?**

We appreciated the opportunity to make a submission to the review of the Queensland Anti-Discrimination Act (ADA) to strengthen its powers and align further with the Disability Discrimination Act (Cth) (DDA). We look forward to the introduction of a Bill to repeal and replace the current ADA, which the Government have committed to do within the current term of government[[1]](#footnote-2).

**25B. What is not going well for the members/clients of your organisation in relation to safety and rights?**

There are ongoing barriers for people who use a Seeing Eye Dog for navigation in terms of access to cafes, restaurants, accommodation and taxi and ride share services. Despite the fact that it is against the law to refuse access to public spaces under the DDA, the ADA and the Guide Hearing and Assistance Dog Act (Qld) (GHADA), it continues to occur on a regular basis. This negatively impacts people with a Seeing Eye Dog accessing transport to get to employment, education and social inclusion.

**25C. What would improve the lives of the members/clients of your organisation in relation to safety and rights?**

The process for lodging a disability discrimination complaint under the DDA and the current ADA can be a protracted one, particularly if people with a Seeing Eye Dog experience multiple access refusals. A potential improvement would be a streamlined process under a new ADA, as well as increased powers for the QHRC to intervene at a systemic level. Another potential improvement would be greater transparency about the fines and penalties imposed for breaches of the GHADA and an awareness raising of the penalties and fines that have been imposed on businesses and individuals.

# About Vision Australia

Vision Australia is the largest national provider of services to people who are blind, deafblind, or have low vision in Australia. We are formed through the merger of several of Australia’s most respected and experienced blindness and low vision agencies, celebrating our 150th year of operation in 2017.

Our vision is that people who are blind, deafblind, or have low vision will increasingly be able to choose to participate fully in every facet of community life. To help realise this goal, we provide high-quality services to the community of people who are blind, have low vision, are deafblind or have a print disability, and their families.

Vision Australia service delivery areas include: registered provider of specialist supports for the NDIS and My Aged Care Aids and Equipment, Assistive/Adaptive Technology training and support, Seeing Eye Dogs, National Library Services, Early childhood and education services, and Feelix Library for 0-7 year olds, employment services, production of alternate formats, Vision Australia Radio network, and national partnership with Radio for the Print Handicapped, Spectacles Program for the NSW Government, Advocacy and Engagement. We also work collaboratively with Government, businesses and the community to eliminate the barriers our clients face in making life choices and fully exercising rights as Australian citizens.

Vision Australia has unrivalled knowledge and experience through constant interaction with clients and their families, of whom we provide services to more than 30,000 people each year, and also through the direct involvement of people who are blind or have low vision at all levels of our organisation. Vision Australia is well placed to advise governments, business and the community on challenges faced by people who are blind or have low vision fully participating in community life.

We have a vibrant Client Reference Group, with people who are blind or have low vision representing the voice and needs of clients of our organisation to the board and management.

Vision Australia is also a significant employer of people who are blind or have low vision, with 15% of total staff having vision impairment.

1. [https://urldefense.com/v3/\_\_https://www.justice.qld.gov.au/initiatives/qld-govt-response-qhrc-anti-discrimination-act-review\_\_;!!BW9V2p7J0Kl2QvQ!E-x0pK0kp\_U-s8MzT\_5o1IZcuBlkoebwwD8CC9R7-MuHo1BTRaLS7uEDCjcqqK-Ef1ksuoXDkG0Q1vtDZXA-xY4leqSPBA$](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https:/www.justice.qld.gov.au/initiatives/qld-govt-response-qhrc-anti-discrimination-act-review__;!!BW9V2p7J0Kl2QvQ!E-x0pK0kp_U-s8MzT_5o1IZcuBlkoebwwD8CC9R7-MuHo1BTRaLS7uEDCjcqqK-Ef1ksuoXDkG0Q1vtDZXA-xY4leqSPBA$) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)