How can Guide Dogs NSW/ACT help those with sight loss?

National Disability Insurance Scheme Provider & My Aged Care - Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) Provider & Home Care Package Vision Services Partner
About us
Our mission
At Guide Dogs NSW/ACT, we believe sight loss shouldn’t stop anyone from living a fulfilling life. We understand that independence and mobility can give an individual the freedom to make connections, embrace new experiences and reach their goals.

How we can help
At Guide Dogs NSW/ACT we understand with sight loss comes life changes, these changes require customised support to ensure the best possible life transition.

Our team will work with our clients to identify needs and develop an individual support plan. We aim to help our clients meet personal goals by providing supports to help increase their independence, minimise the impact of sight loss, increase connection and their participation in education, employment and social activities.
Individualised service

Our team of professionals, including Orientation and Mobility Specialists, Occupational Therapists, Low Vision Orthoptists, Guide Dog Mobility Instructors, Social Workers and Assistive Technology Specialists work with the client and their family to identify individual needs and requirements when planning and delivering services. Most of our services can be provided on a one-to-one basis in the home, school, workplace or local area. This means that services can be provided when and where the client needs it.

Our business hours are between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday. We will endeavour to provide clients with out-of-hours service if they are unable to participate during usual business hours.
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Guide Dogs NSW/ACT can provide clients with many different types of support services depending on their needs. Our services include:

- **Orientation & Mobility**
  - General Orientation & Mobility
  - Early Childhood (0-8 years)
  - Older Children & Teenagers (8-18 years)
  - Neurological Vision Impairment
- **Independent Living Services**
  - Occupational Therapy
  - Assistive Technology
- **Low Vision Orthoptic Services**
- **Client Advocacy & Support Services**

Our Core Services
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  - Early Childhood (0-8 years)
  - Older Children & Teenagers (8-18 years)
  - Neurological Vision Impairment
  - Aids & Technology

- **Independent Living Services**
  - Occupational Therapy
  - Assistive Technology

- **Low Vision Orthoptic Services**

- **Client Advocacy & Support Services**
General Orientation & Mobility

At Guide Dogs NSW/ACT we offer Orientation & Mobility services that will assist clients to maintain and increase independence in mobility.

Programmes are conducted in one-to-one and group formats and focus on:

- Orientation around a client’s home, education facility, workplace and community environments
- Use of various mobility aids such as a cane
- Use of technology to support mobility
- Gross motor skills development
- Promoting different ways of moving around and using skills to compensate for vision impairment or sight loss
How Guide Dogs NSW/ACT assist with orientation and mobility in the workplace?

If a client is working or volunteering, we can support them to travel safely and independently to their workplace. For example, we can recommend changes in a workplace such as:

- Moving a work space to a more appropriate area to support client safety and independence at work
- We can provide information on sight loss to the people the client works with so they can help make the workplace safe, accessible and productive
Learning how to travel to and from a new school

Our specialists can work closely with a client and their family, carers and teachers to make changing schools, or starting TAFE or university easier.

A client may want support in the following areas:

- Learning how to travel to a new school
- Learning how to travel around the school and various school facilities
- Requesting changes to classroom layouts
- Ensuring staff know how to assist a client appropriately
- Recommend equipment to assist the client with educational activities
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Early childhood (0-8 years)

Children are never too young to receive support from Guide Dogs NSW/ACT. We are committed to providing child friendly environments.
Our early childhood Orientation & Mobility (O&M) services are available in home, at pre-schools, primary schools and within other community settings. Our O&M service focuses on supporting a child’s development in key areas allowing them to participate in daily activities. We work as a team with family members and other professionals to support a child to reach their goals.

Supports may include assisting the child to:

- Make the most of their vision at an early age
- Use their other senses such as hearing, touch and smell to learn about their surroundings
- Move and explore their environment with confidence, even before they can walk
Older Children & Teenagers (8-18 years)

As a child gets older they may need to travel independently around school grounds, or between home and school. Guide Dogs NSW/ACT can provide specialised O&M training to assist them to travel independently while learning how to stay safe.
We also run group programmes for school-aged children that provide children with the opportunity to practice their travel skills in a new environment and meet other children the same age.

**Neurological Vision Impairment**

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT also assists individuals who have vision difficulties or issues caused by stroke, tumour or brain injury. These specialised Neurological Vision O&M assessment and intervention programmes are based on compensatory strategies including, visual scanning and are tailored to meet the individual needs of clients. Programmes may involve developing a clients use of scanning strategies to compensate for sight loss.

Support is provided within the hospital, home and community in collaboration with other health professionals.
Technology Aids

Through Guide Dogs NSW/ACT, clients can access a wide range of mobility aids to help with travelling more confidently and safely. Our specialists can assess a mobility aid that will work best for you and also provide training on how to use an aid safely and effectively.

Mobility aids may include long canes, Guide Dogs, mobile phone GPS and other electronic devices. The most common mobility device is the long cane which is used to physically check for landmarks and obstacles on a pathway.

Clients may also use an electronic aid or Guide Dog as well as a long cane.
Guide Dogs

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT have a well established Guide Dogs service. Our Guide Dogs are trained to enhance the mobility of people with sight loss by avoiding obstacles and stopping at steps, kerbs and other important changes in the surface of the path ahead.

Guide Dogs can be trained to locate objects such as seats, traffic light poles, doors and shop counters. Guide Dogs can also be trained to assist people to get to the destinations that they use regularly such as school, work, shops and community venues.
Sight loss can affect an individual’s ability to independently carry out everyday tasks such as cooking, shopping and personal care. Our team of Occupational Therapists can visit clients at home to help identify ways to maximise their existing vision, and offer suggestions for easier ways to do things.

Our team may also suggest a range of practical changes to a client’s home and work environment, such as:

- Tips to make everyday tasks easier
- Small equipment to make everyday tasks easier and quicker, such as tactile markers and kitchen aids
- Suggest changes to lighting
Occupational Therapy

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Assistive Technology Services

Assistive technology is a term for any device or system that allows individuals to perform tasks they would otherwise be unable to do, or increases the ease and safety with which tasks can be performed.

Assistive Technology Specialists work with individuals to achieve their goals through the use of technology such as mobile phone use, computer use including accessibility features and additional accessible software, optical character recognition and braille devices.
Low Vision Orthoptic Services

This service assists people who have been diagnosed with irreversible vision loss that cannot be corrected by conventional eye glasses, surgical or medical intervention.

Often vision loss can affect a person’s ability to read print, write, watch TV or enjoy hobbies.

Our Low Vision Orthoptists work alongside other eye care professionals to provide comprehensive functional low vision assessments, client education and strategies to enhance the use of a person’s remaining vision.

Low Vision Aids may be recommended as part of this service and could include a range of Assistive Technology, Optical Aids, Vision Training, Glare and Lighting solutions.
At Guide Dogs NSW/ACT we have a team of Social Workers who are available to assist clients to identify, coordinate and implement a range of supports which allows them to increase their capability and be more actively engaged in the community.

The Social Work team support clients’ independence by using customised, strengths-based interventions that address the social and emotional issues that are impacting on their wellbeing. Depending on a client’s needs this may include strategies for managing the grief and adjustment to vision loss and opportunities for social connection. Our Social Workers can also provide information, advocacy and appropriate referral in relation
to housing, financial, mental health and relationship issues.

We provide regular group events for people with sight loss, which provide clients the opportunity to meet with other like-minded individuals and improve confidence and social skills.

The Guide Dog NSW/ACT Social Worker team offer NDIS Coordination of support and assistance to clients when they are applying for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and My Aged Care Funding Programme.
Guide Dogs NSW/ACT can help prepare the client for their NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme) planning meeting. A face-to-face meeting with one of our Specialists team will help the client understand what the NDIS means for them and their family and friends.

These meetings can include:

- Detailed information about navigating the NDIS
- The steps involved in applying for the scheme (we can also help with the paperwork)
- Detailed information about the planning and assessment process
- Help with developing a meaningful plan for the future
We can also coordinate a client’s NDIS supports for the duration of their NDIS plan if requested.

The NDIS is available to those who meet the required criteria and are under the age of 65 at time of application.

To find out if you can access the NDIS, please visit www.ndis.gov.au
The My Aged Care Funding is a Commonwealth Funding programme available for individuals aged 65 years and over, and incorporates the following programme and packages:

- Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP)
- Commonwealth Home Care Packages

**What is the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP)??**

The Commonwealth Home Support Programme aims to provide short-term, low-intensity support services to an individual residing at home. It focuses on maximising a person’s independence and safety at home.

Eligibility for the Commonwealth Home Support Programme includes:
• Aged 65 years and over; or 50 years and over for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
• Has difficulty performing activities of daily living without help due to functional limitations; and
• Lives in the community

The following Guide Dogs NSW/ACT services may be funded under “Specialised Support Services – Vision Services”:

• Orientation and Mobility Assessment and Training (including Guide Dog Mobility)
• Low Vision Home-Based Assessment and Training
• Assistive Technology Assessment and Training
• Occupational Therapy Assessment and Training
• Client Advocacy and Support (including Social Work Assessment and Intervention)
What is a Home Care Package?

The Home Care Packages Programme aims to help older Australians with complex or high care needs to live independently in their own home. The Australian Government provides a subsidy to an approved provider of home care to coordinate a package of care, services and case management to meet the individual needs of older Australians.

Individuals approved for a home care package are placed on a national queue until a package becomes available and is assigned to them.

There are four levels of support:

• Home Care Level 1 – Basic Care Needs
• Home Care Level 2 – Low Level Care Needs
• Home Care Level 3 – Intermediate Care Needs
• Home Care Level 4 – High Care Needs

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT is not a Home Care Package provider as we do not offer the multitude of services often required by older adults with complex needs; such as nursing, in-home assistance, transport etc. However, if a client requires vision services, Guide Dogs NSW/ACT can work with your designated Home Care Provider to provide funded services including Orientation and Mobility, Low Vision, Occupational Therapy, Assistive Technology and Social Work services.

To find out more, please visit www.myagedcare.gov.au
Our services are available to everyone with sight loss. We do not discriminate based on age, gender, culture, language, religion, sexual identity or relationship status.

If a client requires services in another language, we can arrange for an interpreter to attend appointments. Family members and other support people are also welcome to attend appointments.

We are committed to providing culturally appropriate services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
We are able to provide information in accessible formats, such as large print, braille or electronic (e.g. email or audio file). We can also provide information in another language on request.
For further information on our services, or to request an appointment with one of our Specialists, please contact us on:

Phone: **1800 484 333**


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Guide Dogs NSW/ACT receives about 5% of its funding from the Government and is financially dependent on the generosity of the people of NSW/ACT.

All Guide Dogs NSW/ACT services are available at no cost to the client. By clients utilising their NDIS or My Aged Care to fund our services, it allows Guide Dogs NSW/ACT to assist more individuals with a vision impairment throughout NSW and the ACT community.
Guide Dogs NSW/ACT have been assessed and verified as complying with the requirements of the NSW Disability Service Standards.