



Don't turn a blind eye

Footpath Obstructions

Overhanging Branches

A recent survey conducted by Guide Dogs NSW/ACT of people with impaired vision reported an alarmingly high percentage of footpath obstructions, such as overhanging branches, footpath dining, rubbish bins, signs and uneven paths which had impacted on each person's ability to get out and about in their local community.

A person using a cane may not detect all hazards.

A person using a Guide Dog may be taken off the path to avoid the hazard.

A person with low vision may not see the hazard.

What happens when a footpath obstruction is encountered, the person must:

- recover from the unexpected shock
- find their way around the hazard, which can force them into another hazardous situation
- relocate their path
- re-establish their direction
- continue on their journey with trepidation until their next encounter with a hazard
- In order to help reduce the incidence of this happening, a few simple actions can make a big difference.

The issue

A leading footpath obstruction reported by 78% of clients in a recent survey by Guide Dogs NSW/ACT is overhanging bushes and branches.

Whether the bushes or branches are overhanging from the sides or above they are an unexpected and dangerous hazard for people with impaired vision. This is made even



worse when the branches are wet as they usually hang lower into the path of travel.

This can negatively affect the person's confidence and independence.

Solution

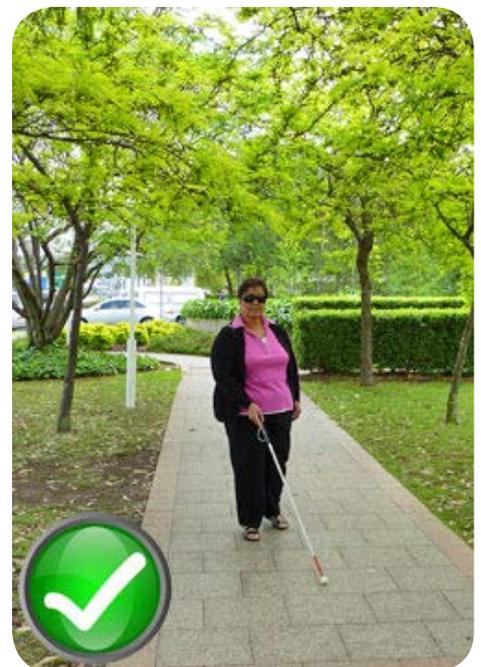
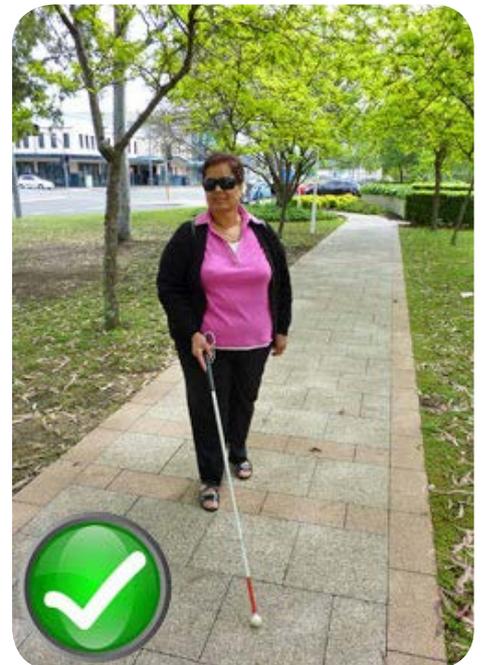
- Keep trees and bushes trimmed vertically and horizontally away from footpaths
- Vertical clearance on paths should be to a minimum of 2 metres in wet weather.
- Trees and shrubs should be trimmed back so that they are well clear from the pedestrian area, not just from the made path.

What can the public do?

- Ensure that the trees on their property are trimmed so that they do not present a hazard
- Report any areas that have overhanging trees and shrubs to Council so that they can be trimmed
- Sweep footpaths regularly, particularly when trees are dropping leaves and seed pods as they are a slip hazard

What can Councils do?

- Ensure that street trees are trimmed so that they do not present a hazard
- Respond promptly to complaints about the need for trees to be trimmed
- Ensure that footpaths are swept regularly, to minimise slip hazards caused by fallen leaves and seed pods



Access Checklist

- ✓ Trees and shrubs should be vertically trimmed to above 2.2 metres
- ✓ Horizontal Clearance should be the full width of the footpath
- ✓ Report issues to Local Council



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