

**Submission
No 24**

**INQUIRY INTO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITY IN NEW SOUTH WALES EDUCATIONAL
SETTINGS**

Organisation: Vision Australia
Date Received: 26 February 2024



Vision Australia Submission: Inquiry into Children and Young People with disability in NSW Educational Settings

Submission to: Portfolio Committee 3 – Education, Legislative Council

Date: 26 February 2024

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

Introduction

Vision Australia is pleased to have the opportunity to provide a submission to the Inquiry into Children and Young People with disability in NSW Educational Settings (**the Inquiry**).

This submission addresses relevant items in the Terms of Reference as they relate to students who are blind or have low vision.

Context

The importance of inclusive education for students with disability cannot be overstated. It was a considerable focus of the recent Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (**the DRC**). In Volume 7 of its Final Report, the DRC stated:

“An inclusive education is vital because it shapes the self-esteem and aspirations of students with disability. It also maximises students’ ability to gain rewarding employment, participate fully in the community and lead a fulfilling life... School education is perhaps the most important opportunity to shape attitudes and social norms relevant to people with disability. An inclusive education fosters respect and embraces the differences, diversity and inherent dignity of people with disability. These attitudes and values are critical in preventing violence against, and the abuse, neglect and exploitation of, people with disability...”

An inclusive schooling system should aim to ensure that students with disability access and participate in learning and extracurricular activities to the greatest extent they can and on an equal basis with their peers...”

For Australians who are blind or have low vision, quality and inclusive education at all levels is vital to enabling later participation in the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural spheres of society on the same basis as other members of the community.

There is a particularly strong link between a quality education and the subsequent gaining of meaningful employment. Vision Australia research has shown that 75% of people who are blind or have low vision that also have a tertiary education are employed. Given the otherwise low employment rates for the blind and low vision community¹, it is clear that an education system that is inclusive and accessible and allows access to tertiary education is critical to improving employment and economic outcomes for this cohort.

¹ A report conducted by Vision Australia in 2012 showed that 58% of the blind and low vision community were not working. Furthermore, a 2018 research study conducted by CNIB Foundation (Canada), Vision Australia and the Blind Foundation of New Zealand found that people with a vision impairment were significantly less likely to be employed than their sighted counterparts.

It is also important to mention, that whilst we welcome the Inquiry, and similar reviews on the experiences of students with disability, to have any long-lasting impact on inclusive education, we also need significant change around attitudes and awareness of disability at all levels. As the DRC noted in Volume 7 of its Final Report:

“Changing attitudes to promote inclusive education requires concerted effort from all sectors of society, including governments, schools, teachers and parents.”

Relevant Measures

We submit that the following measures, which are explained further in the body of this submission, would have an impact in making education more inclusive for students in NSW who are blind or have low vision:

1. Implementation of the matters set out in recommendation 7.3 of the DRC Final Report (Improve policies and procedures on the provision of reasonable adjustments to students with a disability).
2. Establishment of an independent enforcement mechanism to monitor the provision of educational adjustments for students with a disability.
3. Establishment of an inclusive education unit as a central repository for resources and expertise on inclusive education (as per recommendation 7.7 of the DRC Final Report).
4. Improvement of workforce capability, expertise and development on disability inclusion (as per recommendation 7.8 of the DRC Final Report).
5. The treatment of specialist vision teachers and Braille instruction as essential components of the supports available to students in the education system who are blind or have low vision.
6. The creation of a complaint management office within the Department of Education which is at arm’s length from schools (as per recommendation 7.10 of the DRC Final Report).
7. The embedding of complaint handling duties and measures in registration requirements for schools in NSW (as per recommendation 7.10 of the DRC Final Report).
8. The implementation of a formal process for collaboration between disability service providers and educational providers to better serve the interests of students with disability.
9. The harmonisation of educational supports and NDIS supports.

Vision Australia Survey

To inform this submission, Vision Australia conducted a survey of students in NSW who are blind or have low vision, and parents and carers of those students, about their educational experiences (**the VA Survey**). The students ranged in age from 5 to 18 years old. We asked questions about student/parent experiences in relation to enrolment, educational adjustments, individual education plans, complaints, visiting teachers, braille and collaboration between schools and external disability service providers. We received

38 complete responses to the survey, which was open to participants for a period of two weeks.

In relation to the survey:

- 95% of the respondents to the survey were parents or carers of students in NSW who are blind or have low vision, and 5% were students themselves.
- 50% of students attended primary school in NSW, and 50% were high school students.
- 63% of students attended public schools, 18% of students attended Catholic schools, 11% of students attended Independent schools, and 8% of students attended Schools for Specific Purposes.
- 5% of students were totally blind, 37% of students were legally blind, and 58% of students had low vision.
- 45% of students had disabilities additional to blindness or low vision, including autism, hearing impairment, ADHD, intellectual impairment and acquired brain injury.
- 45% of students lived in an urban area, 50% of students lived in a regional area, and 5% of students lived in a remote area.

Findings from the VA survey are discussed throughout this submission, but some of the common themes which emerged were:

1. There is a lack of consistency in the educational supports and services being provided to students who are blind or have low vision in NSW schools, including with respect to specialised vision teachers and Braille instruction. The results of the VA survey showed that there was little variation in this regard between the different school systems within the NSW education sector.
2. Complaints about educational providers are considered difficult to make, and are generally not resolved to the satisfaction of complainants, or are warranted but not pursued.
3. Supports from external disability service providers are important in complementing the supports provided by the school system but there is a lack of effective collaboration between educational providers and external service providers.

The quotes that we have included in this submission from respondents to the VA Survey, reflect experiences with all school types, and show that there is no one school system that guarantees equity in educational outcomes for students who are blind or have low vision.

Educational Adjustments

In our general experience, there has been little consistency in educational adjustments and services received by students who are blind or have low vision. There has tended to be a significant variance between schools and between educators. Unacceptably, for children who are blind or have low vision, support and assistance has seemed to depend on what school they attend, the teacher allocated to their class, and the extent to which parents are able to effectively advocate for their child. This is reflected in the responses to the VA survey.

The VA Survey – What educational adjustments are being made?

Of the respondents to the VA survey, 87% said that their school had made adjustments to make it easier for the student to learn, and 68% said that their school had made adjustments to make it easier for the student to participate in the educational setting. This implies that almost a third of schools had no adjustments in place to assist blind and low vision students to participate fully in their school communities.

There were a range of adjustments listed by respondents, which can be broadly categorised as:

1. Provision of material in an alternative format.
2. Access to assistive technology.
3. Alternate seating arrangements in the classroom, and screen mirroring for devices.
4. Additional time for assessments.
5. Adjustments to the built environment, such as contrast lines.
6. Provision of low vision aids.
7. Access to support teachers.
8. Support for sporting lessons and activities.
9. Social supports.

The VA Survey – Consistency and Satisfaction with Educational Adjustments

Whilst it is pleasing that some of the students the subject of the VA Survey are receiving appropriate educational adjustments, the provision and extent of adjustments was still inconsistent amongst the respondents. In this respect, we note that responses to the VA survey showed that:

1. 13% of the subject students were receiving no adjustments at all in relation to their learning.
2. 32% of the subject students were receiving no adjustments at all to assist with their participation at school.
3. 33% of respondents were either neutral to, or dissatisfied with their educational supports.

One of the respondents made the comment:

“Changes have been tick the box exercises. At first he was isolated at the back of the classroom with a CCTV and slope desk. When he found writing under a CCTV difficult he was told not to talk back and do as he was told. He was often given homework and worksheets in normal font and spacing which he can't read even under CCTV unless it's at least 1.5 line spacing and large print. Even then his reading is fairly slow as he has binocular vision and can often get double vision when he fatigues. As a result they have let him fall behind – he is barely reading and can't access work unless someone is next to him to help. I have escalated and asked to be involved in helping them understand his condition but they refuse

to communicate with me until I get a report card that tells me he's been struggling for 6 months. My son is above average intelligence based on a neuropsychological report I was asked to get and seeing him lose confidence and fall behind has been heartbreaking. I am so worried about his future. He has so much potential. Also I was told to buy him an iPad which never worked in the classroom as it didn't connect to the smart board via adobe connect and yet he was always in trouble for not using it. This behaviour would get me fired in the workplace but it's allowed in a classroom. I expected teachers to actually care and be experts in vision if they're itinerant support but they're not."

Another respondent said:

"They printed everything in A3 which we told them not to. Without a bigger desk this just created another challenge for him to be unable to manage all the poster size paperwork and disadvantaged to write in exams. When graphs, charts, pictures etc are in learning materials or exams he needs them bigger. This was never done and they now say this year they will do that. All the text books are in Box of Books but he can't make the font larger so he is further disadvantaged as it takes so long and is nearly impossible to read anything from the text for classes. The school said they can't do anything about it. I guess he isn't blind enough."

A further respondent said:

"While the school has made some adjustments (providing materials in large print and braille) there are numerous reasonable adjustments that have not been made. The level of ISTV support has been reduced (as my daughter is no longer a predominantly braille user) and has been compounded with various obstacles in relation to the mode of teaching that was going to be taught. It kept changing from a mix of braille and large print, to braille only, to predominantly large print and some braille. Initially the school mentioned that she would be placed in a new building with no stairs, they have now placed her on the top floor of one building that only has access via 3 flights of stairs."

Another respondent said:

"So far my children have had access to ISTV support which has enabled them to trial large print resources and the use of technology. Environmental assessments have been completed and reports written though no action has been made on the report recommendations in the last two years."

In contrast, other respondents commented:

"My child had lots of adjustments! She has since kindergarten up to now and she is in year 6 this year, itinerant teacher for vision impairment students. My child has CCTV, big print, big textbooks, soccer ball with bell inside, special computer."

“We have been extremely fortunate to have a supportive school environment for our child. We believe this is a combination of the exemplary attitudes of the staff at the school as well as our ability to advocate for our child.”

“My child school was great and they have supported her always in many ways!”

“Much of the amazing support he has is driven by his vision teacher – she is incredible and we would be lost without her.”

It is unacceptable that students with similar needs should be receiving different levels of educational support, and having different experiences, particularly where there is overarching legislation and Standards of nearly 20 years standing designed to ensure that all students with disability have the necessary supports to learn and participate on the same basis as their peers. It is clear that some students are well supported, but others are moderately or poorly supported. It should not be the case that students ultimately receive different life outcomes because of the way in which legislative obligations are implemented by their school, or not implemented, as the case may be. The lack of awareness and training for schools and staff in their obligations to students under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (**the DDA**) and the Standards is a fundamental issue in this regard. It is also an issue that the Standards do not require the documentation of educational adjustments, nor an evaluation of whether those adjustments have been effective.

In Volume 7 of its Final Report, the DRC noted:

“Evidence at Public hearing 7 addressed decision-making processes in New South Wales and Queensland on the provision of adjustments for students with disability. The Commissioners made a general finding that ‘ultimately, the provision of reasonable adjustments is largely left to the judgment and discretion of educators, with little departmental oversight.’

...

Following Public hearing 7, Counsel Assisting submitted that, in the absence of training, decision makers are unlikely to fully appreciate their legal obligations when considering whether to provide adjustments to a student with disability.

We accept the submissions of Counsel Assisting. Our findings accord with those of past reports and inquiries that highlighted that the concepts of reasonable adjustments and unjustifiable hardship are not well understood.

...

Mr Potter appeared on behalf of the State of New South Wales at Public hearing 7. He stated that his expectation was that ‘professional people in schools would clearly understand what was required to be in place to support students with

disabilities'. He also expected that school personnel would take advice from experts, both within and outside the New South Wales Department of Education, when making decisions about students with a disability. However, he said it was ultimately a decision for the principal to identify appropriate adjustments for the student. Mr Potter accepted that identifying a reasonable adjustment was a matter that involves considerable discretion. This could lead to very different experiences for students at different schools.

New South Wales agreed that, in principle, better direction and guidance should be given to educators about the requirements under the DDA and the Education Standards. Since July 2020, the New South Wales department requires school leaders, including principals, to complete training in the DDA and the Education Standards every three years. The New South Wales Department of Education website now provides additional resources that outline the legal obligations of educators in New South Wales and the training available to support their skills and capabilities in this area."

The DRC has directed extensive recommendations to State and Territory governments in relation to reasonable adjustments for students with disability (refer recommendation 7.3). We consider that the proper implementation of these recommendations in NSW would be a good first step in addressing the inconsistencies that exist for students who are blind or have low vision in receiving adjustments, as well as other students with disability more broadly. We also suggest that, separately to these recommendations, an enforcement mechanism be established to monitor the provision of educational adjustments for students with a disability. This should be done by a body independent of the Department of Education which has the power to conduct specific and random audits with the aim of monitoring and improving compliance.

In addition, we support the establishment of an inclusive education unit in NSW as a central repository for resources and expertise on inclusive education (refer DRC recommendation 7.7). It would be our strong suggestion that this unit be properly equipped to provide support on the full spectrum of disabilities with which students may present and employ persons with the knowledge and lived experience to give this support.

Further, we strongly support the improvement of workforce capability, expertise and development on disability inclusion (refer DRC recommendation 7.8). It is vital for educators to be armed with the requisite knowledge needed to support children with disability in the education sector. We would urge that part of this should include the development of on-demand training programmes with respect to lower incidence disability types such as blindness and low vision.

The VA Survey – Specialised Supports

Survey participants were also asked what other supports they would like to have in the school setting. Several of the responses demonstrated a need for more specialist vision teachers, more time with those teachers, and better understanding of vision impairment by educators. In answer to this question, respondents said:

“Access to Vision Support Teacher from Dept of Education 2 hours per week to support teachers and student.”

“More vision support hours in support classes. Supported students get far less vision hours than students in mainstream classes when they need the same if not more help...”

“I would like to be confident that all teachers, including substitutes are aware of special needs and accommodations and talk to my child if unsure...”

“Visiting support teacher with specific knowledge in vision support.”

“I would like to see more funding so my child could have their vision teacher attend school for more than 1 hour per week.”

“Intensive learning and assistance during school to help with learning. Listening to a parent over someone who doesn’t know the child at all.”

“Teachers to be aware and have an understanding of students disability and it’s limitations and know how to teach without visual cues, to check the student can see what they are doing ok, and to check they are understanding by taking time to check their work from time to time through the class as they may not want to draw attention to themselves for instance. To discreetly check in with the student from time to time and have a general care of their learning experience.”

“For my child to be able to read text books for his school work. For the school to understand what visually impaired means such as font size, contrast and how reading font vs looking a pictures or diagrams is different visually in terms of difficulty and this needs to be accommodated.”

“To have increased support for a vision teacher...”

“Expert teachers in vision who partner with parents and therapists. Support with teaching a child how to use assistive technology consistently for each different task until they get the hang of it...Help with helping the child learn in a completely different way in a caring and compassionate way.”

“Better understanding of vision impairment by all staff, to better engage with my son. Better communication of staff around what supports work well for my son so it’s not re-examined everytime.”

Of the respondents to the VA survey, only 65% reported having access to a specialised vision teacher. For those who had a specialised teacher, the views on the level of effectiveness of this support varied. Comments made by respondents suggest that this

may be due to the need for these teachers to spend more time with their students, and for improvements in training for these teachers.

It is of the utmost importance for education providers to ensure that specialist vision teachers are engaged for all students who are blind or have low vision, and that these teachers are engaged on a basis which will meet the needs of the students they support. They need to be treated as an essential component of supports for students in the education system who are blind or have low vision. To properly fulfill their roles, visiting teachers should also be given access to high quality training.

Specialised vision teachers are necessary for teaching the concepts, skills and knowledge which a student who is blind or has low vision is unlikely to acquire in the same manner as their sighted peers. These include braille literacy, adaptive technology training, orientation and mobility, compensatory skills training, independent living skills, social skills and career counselling. Given the specialised nature of these areas, specialist vision teachers are in the best position to assist students who are blind or low vision in this respect. These teachers are also vital in training classroom teachers and other staff in the strategies and adjustments which will assist students who are blind or have low vision in the classroom and in the broader school environment.

The VA Survey – The process of seeking educational adjustments

There was also a commonality amongst respondents to the VA survey of needing to advocate to ensure the provision of supports and adjustments by educational providers. 18% said that it was neither easy nor difficult to ask their school for adjustments, 13% said it was somewhat difficult and 26% said it was extremely difficult. The balance of respondents found it either somewhat easy or extremely easy to undertake this process.

One respondent said:

“It has been an absolute nightmare dealing with the school on a local level... It would seem like you would need a strong legal background and advocacy background to get reasonable and basic visual and curriculum adjustments made. It has been overwhelming, defeating and demoralising throughout the majority of my daughters education experience.”

Other respondents commented:

“I have had to fight for and continue to jump up and down to get what we have in place.”

“I am sick of it always feeling like a ‘fight’. I am sick of feeling like we are asking for look much, or being that pest or pain when we ask for fair and reasonable supports for our son.”

“Trying to have items approved or considered can be a very lengthy process taking 1 year in some circumstances.”

Specifically in relation to Individual Education Plans for students, two respondents also commented:

“It is something that I have had to advocate for, and with the schools my student has attended. Nothing is provided without me pushing hard for it. Advocating is a full-time job and that has prevented me from contributing to Australia economically.”

“These would not be made or reviewed regularly without my insistence and the support of our ISTV.”

These responses demonstrate that, at least in some circumstances, the level of knowledge that a parent has, and their ability to advocate, plays a factor in the educational adjustments that a student receives. It is concerning that factors such as these come into play, because it potentially puts certain students at an automatic disadvantage, and causes unfair disparities for students being educated in the same systems. Put simply, equity in education for a student who is blind or has low vision should not depend on the ability or confidence of parents to advocate for that student.

Complaints

We are generally aware that complaints systems within the education sector can be difficult to navigate and that families often feel deterred from making complaints about educational providers.

Of the respondents to the VA Survey, 26% had made a complaint about a school. The majority of these complaints related to a lack of school supports and discrimination. All but one of these complaints (which had been escalated to the NSW Minister for Education) had been made to the school directly, or to the relevant department or diocese office. None of the complaints had been made using the provisions of the DDA or the associated Standards. This may be an indication that families perceive it to be too difficult or time consuming to enforce the Standards when issues arise. Concerningly, 30% of respondents said that it was extremely difficult to make the complaint, and 40% said that it was somewhat difficult. None of the respondents reported that the complaint was extremely easy to make. Of further concern was that for 80% of respondents the complaint was not resolved to their satisfaction, with some of the comments regarding these matters including:

“Nothing has come from it. No response from either.”

“Nothing I got swept under the mat and told to use my ndis money to help her.”

“I never heard back from them.”

“There was just buck passing and then nothing happened.”

“Still waiting to hear. We tried escalating within the department of Ed but all we get is pushback – the child is at fault.”

“Nothing, we just minimise interaction with this staff member.”

Of the remaining respondents to the VA survey, 36% said that they had wanted to make a complaint but had not gone ahead with it. In terms of the reasons for this, 50% reported feeling that it was not going to make a difference, 28% had a fear of retribution, 17% did not know how to complain and 6% felt it was too time consuming.

Some of the general comments regarding the complaints processes for schools were:

“It seems like a convoluted and difficult process with very little to no positive outcome.”

“Waste of time complaining they do nothing.”

“It wouldn’t change the harm that had already occurred. Prevention is far better than punishment – this requires TRAINING and investment.”

“It would be good to have more information about the process and how it works.”

“It needs to be clear, documented formerly and a 3rd party arms length to the schools and not on education pay roll needs to be involved.”

The reported difficulty in making complaints and achieving outcomes from those complaints undoubtedly contributes to a lack of adherence by educational providers to their obligations under the DDA and the Standards. In its Final Report, the DRC also recognised the challenges around complaints in the education sector, recommending the creation or expansion of complaint management offices within educational authorities which are at arm’s length from schools, particularly for the purpose of addressing complaints about students with disability (refer recommendation 7.10). The DRC also recommended embedding complaint handling duties and measures in registration requirements for schools as a means of enforcing compliance with those duties (refer recommendation 7.10). We support both of those recommendations, and would urge their adoption in NSW.

Braille

Braille is key to literacy for people who are blind. It is of fundamental importance that braille skills are incorporated into school programs for all children who are blind or have a level of vision which means they are unable to use print effectively. Braille training should also be offered to children whose vision is likely to further deteriorate in the future. The results from the VA Survey though are consistent with prior experiences of Vision Australia clients, where Braille instruction has either been delayed or not taught at all.

Of the respondents to the VA Survey, 13% learnt Braille at school. Of the remaining respondents to the survey, though, 39% reported wanting their child to learn Braille at school, but 84% of those respondents had not been offered that opportunity.

Two of the respondents commented:

“I would like my child to learn Braille at school. We do this but individual outside the school. She is not fully blind so NSW department does not want her to learn Braille.”

“I’ve received push back on braille. My concerns about ATMs or timetables into the future are met with push back. They advise that talkback loops on ATMs or train stations are available. My concern is, what about the times the technology isn’t available. I feel its taking a potentially helpful skill out of her tool box.”

It is a common misconception that audio can be used as a replacement for Braille as a means of accessing information for students who are blind or have low vision. Braille, however, is necessary to provide direct access to the core elements of literacy and numeracy. Braille and audio are complementary, not competing, ways of accessing information. Braille will remain essential for people who are blind or have low vision for so long as print is essential to the sighted population. Braille must be offered to students who are blind or have low vision where those students fall within the indicated parameters. A failure to do so results in a disadvantage to these students in comparison to their sighted peers.

Interaction with Service Providers

For many students who are blind or have low vision, supports received within the education sector are complemented by supports being provided by external specialists like Vision Australia. Further, in many instances, the knowledge that external service providers have about their clients can be useful to educational providers in informing the adjustments that might be made in a classroom or to the school environment. It is not uncommon in our experience, however, for educational providers to be reluctant to collaborate with external providers. We believe that a process for better collaboration between disability service providers and educational providers should be implemented to ensure that students with disability are achieving their potential in the education system. It is only with genuine consultation and communication, and by partnering with parents and other external stakeholders, that educational providers can ensure that students with disability reach their educational goals. Too often strategies that could assist a student with disability are not put into practice because the knowledge and expertise that sits with external stakeholders is not sought or considered by educational providers.

Of the respondents to the VA survey, 74% received services from disability service providers outside the school system. Of these, 68% reported these services as being extremely important in complementing the supports provided by the school system, but

46% said that the people who support their child at school did not communicate with their disability service providers. Where there was communication, 20% of respondents said it was slightly effective in meeting the educational needs of the student, 20% said it was moderately effective, 33% said it was very effective, and 27% said it was extremely effective.

The preference of some parents for positive interaction between educational providers and external providers was highlighted in comments made by respondents to the VA Survey, as follows:

“If it wasn’t for the external providers continually reaching out to the school I believe my daughter’s poor educational experience would be completely non-existent if left to the school alone to interact with external providers. The external providers that are engaged with my daughter are providing essential curriculum learning which isn’t their responsibility and the Department of Education is severely lacking is reactive and not proactive and continues to fail providing equitable access to school life.”

“No the school doesn’t they shut them out and won’t work on her disability at all.”

“Specialists from outside the school could be given further opportunity to be involved in IEP plans.”

“There is no connection and I wish there was.”

“The school always seems to want to do it their way, their opinion even though in disability it is not their area of expertise or knowledge base. Collaboration does not truly happen. All his therapist say they feel like they are hitting their heads up against a brick wall.”

“Teachers have never called the therapists I’ve requested them to get advice from even though I’ve signed consent forms allowing them to do so.”

We also believe there needs to be careful consideration given to the interface between supports provided to students with disability as part of the education system, and NDIS supports. It is in the best interests of students for the interaction of these supports to be harmonised. Whilst we appreciate the distinction between the supports from a funding perspective, they both aim to improve overall outcomes for a student and should not be treated as being isolated from one another. It may also assist in clarifying for schools that where a student does have NDIS funding, that funding is not available to fund educational supports for which the education system is otherwise recognised as being responsible. We are aware of instances where this assumption has been made, and at least one respondent to the VA Survey raised this as an issue.

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 Felix 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.