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Simple tips to assisting people with vision loss

It's not uncommon to see people with vision loss using a white cane to navigate their way around the community.

Mark Battista, of Guide Dogs SA.NT, says many people are concerned about whether they should offer to help or not.

"If you meet a person who uses a cane, they are probably getting around safely and confidently on their own.

"However, if the person appears to be having trouble they might appreciate an offer of help."

Sometimes it's as simple as helping find a product or reading a price in a shop; or reading a bus timetable or the destination on the front of a bus.

Mark recommends that if you actually need to lead the person somewhere, that you should allow them to take your arm.

"Never take hold of their arm or cane and always ask before assuming they need help.

"Remember to tell the person what is about to happen, such as going through a door or stepping off a kerb; and always say when you are leaving."

You can also assist a person with vision loss by:

- Trimming branches which overhang footpaths
- Ensuring footpaths are free from obstacles, such as bikes, shop display boards
- Keeping passageways clear – leave doors fully open or closed, not ajar
- Not parking vehicles across driveways
- Reporting raised pavers and other footpath hazards to your local council.
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Anyone wanting to know more information about Guide Dogs SA.NT or ways they can assist the organisation should phone 1800 738 855 or visit www.guidedogs.org.au

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