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Help for people with vision loss

The incidence of blindness in Australia is rapidly increasing in line with Australia's ageing population, yet many people are not aware of how much help is actually available.

The majority of vision loss is caused by eye diseases or an acquired brain injury, such as a stroke, according to Mark Battista of Guide Dogs SA.NT Vision Services.

About half of blindness in Australia today is actually preventable and treatable, but many people choose not to have regular eye tests which puts them at greater risk of developing blindness.

Mr Battista says that while most people associate Guide Dogs SA.NT with the breeding, training and provision of guide dogs, the organisation actually helps many more people who simply need help with everyday living tasks as a result of vision loss.

"Losing your vision is a confronting issue, but we can find ways for people to achieve the majority of their goals and maintain their independence."

"People with low vision can still pursue the majority of their hobbies, such as sewing and bowls, read books and use their computers with low vision."

Mr Battista says people with low vision are often amazed at how simple strategies and inexpensive equipment can make such a difference to their lives.

There is wide range of simple and inexpensive equipment available to assist them, including:

- Magnifiers
- Large print and tactile daily living aids
- Talking clocks and watches
- Large print playing cards
- Needle threaders
- Liquid level indicators (useful for making hot drinks safely).

Services are also available for those with more significant vision loss, including Orientation and Mobility Services, with specialised staff working on a one-to-one basis, providing help with

Guide Dogs Association of SA and NT Inc | Full member of the International Guide Dog Federation

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- GUIDE DOG SERVICES
- ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY SERVICES
- SENSORY DIRECTIONS
- HEARING SOLUTIONS

- Safety in the home
- Avoiding objects of hazards
- Managing steps, stairs, railways platforms and other changes in elevation
- Fear of going outside without support
- Becoming disoriented in familiar or unfamiliar environments
- Crossing roads with or without traffic controls
- Using public transport
- Travelling at night or in poor lighting conditions.

Training programs can include using a white cane, low vision, electronic travel devices and guide dog training, if desired after white cane training.

Please call 1800 738 855 to find out more about Guide Dogs SA.NT Vision Services. All services are provided free to clients.