



Acquired Brain Injury Mobility Service

Guide Dogs Victoria 



THE MOBILITY EXPERTS

Guide Dogs Victoria is a premium provider of Orientation & Mobility Services to Victorians who are blind or vision impaired. These services include Children's Mobility, Acquired Brain Injury Mobility, Orientation & Mobility and, of course, Guide Dogs.

The primary aim of all our services is to enhance our clients' safety, independence and quality of life at every stage of their life's journey.

We can assist people from the age of five and upwards, with no age limit. We provide prompt and professional services right across metropolitan and regional Victoria. Our dedicated team of staff travel to every corner of the state to assist clients in and around their home environments.

All of Guide Dogs Victoria's individually tailored services including training, consultations, counselling, Guide Dogs, accommodation and meals are provided entirely free of charge.

The length and breadth of our training programs are entirely dependent on our client's needs and are not restricted or capped by Government or case mix funding. We welcome referrals and can address your mobility needs – whatever they may be.



ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURY MOBILITY

Since 1979, Guide Dogs Victoria's Acquired Brain Injury Mobility Service has provided a specialised assessment and training program to address the complex needs of people living with an acquired brain injury. We can help people optimise their use of remaining vision, other senses and cognitive skills to regain safe and independent mobility.

The Acquired Brain Injury Mobility Team consists of Orientation & Mobility Instructors and Occupational Therapists with specialist knowledge of vision and cognitive issues experienced by clients. Access to specialist assistance staff is also available including an Optometrist, Psychologist, Neuropsychologist, Physiotherapist and Audiologist.

WHO CAN BENEFIT?

Approximately 13,000 Victorians experience severe to profound brain injury each year from conditions such as a stroke, head injury, brain tumour or post-operative damage. The majority experience a significant level of vision loss*. While we commonly consider vision loss occurring through damage to the eyes, many different areas of the brain are involved in interpreting what our eyes see and directing appropriate responses. There is a strong likelihood that any brain injury will result in changes to a person's vision and impact on their mobility.

There are many different kinds of vision impairments that can develop as a result of damage to the brain. For example, we help people experiencing double vision, severe low vision, total vision loss, difficulties with eye movement or closure of their eyelids. Some people living with an acquired brain injury experience confusion moving through the environment due to an inability to cope with an overload of sensory information. In all these cases, new glasses or eye surgery cannot solve the problems.

Children and adults commonly referred to the Acquired Brain Injury Mobility Service experience one or more of the following difficulties:

- Visual field losses
- Perceptual vision problems
- Neglect syndromes



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- Ocular disorders secondary to neurological damage (optic atrophy)
 - Cranial nerve palsies which may result in diplopia or closure of the eyelids
 - Eye movement problems
 - Total vision loss or severe low vision

***Statistics provided by Headway Victoria.**

An Acquired Brain Injury can cause damage to the cranial nerves which are responsible for controlling eye movements. When both eyes do not work together, visual images overlap causing double vision (pictured below).



VISUAL FIELD LOSS

Training programs are also tailored for those with a visual field loss often referred to as a Homonymous Hemianopia. For these people, the world has suddenly been reduced by half. People standing opposite have only half a face. Print dances around on the page and words disappear from view. Moving around in a busy environment is hazardous.

People and objects appear from nowhere and there is a danger of collision with obstacles on the affected side of the visual field. In severe cases, people may even fail to see half the food on their plate. This type of vision loss can affect either side of the visual field and to varying degrees. The individual will perceive they are blind in one eye. This is not so. There is a visual field loss in both eyes due to the inability of the brain to correctly interpret what the eyes see.

An example of vision with Hemianopia (Left Homonymous)





ASSESSMENT

Each client undergoes an initial assessment which aims to:

- Determine the ability to move freely and safely around a range of environments and establish appropriate mobility goals
- Determine the extent of vision loss and impact on independent travel skills
- Determine the impact of other impairments eg. memory, balance, attention and concentration
- Determine the ability to walk confidently on different surfaces
- Evaluate the need for a mobility aid
- Educate the individual, their family and rehabilitation professionals about the nature and impact of the vision loss

The Instructors encourage each client and their families to give their input into developing individually tailored programs designed to achieve the client's optimal potential and personal goals.



TRAINING

■ STATIC TRAINING

The Vision Assessment and Training Tool uses feedback from the neck muscles to help develop the appropriate degree of head turn required to compensate for the vision loss. This tool can also teach the client compensatory scanning skills to cope with a visual field loss or functional vision loss. Once static skills have become automatic in structured settings, the client is ready to transfer these skills to local routes.

■ DYNAMIC TRAINING

Client goals may focus training on:

- Scanning to compensate for the vision loss
- Increasing awareness of the functional vision loss
- Transfer of training strategies from indoor settings to increasingly challenging environments ranging from residential to busy shopping areas where appropriate
- Road crossing strategies
- Public transport
- Development of problem solving, planning and other cognitive skills necessary for safe, reliable and independent mobility
- Introductory training or reinforcement of mobility aid techniques if required

PROGRAM FLEXIBILITY

All programs are individually tailored to address each person's goals, mobility needs and the impact of the acquired brain injury. Training is focused on safe pedestrian skills including road crossing strategies. It may also include the development of other skills related to mobility such as reading, money handling, shopping and public transport. Where appropriate, training is conducted in conjunction with family members and rehabilitation professionals.

TRAINING VENUES

Guide Dogs Victoria can assist Victorians living in both metropolitan and regional areas.

Training will be conducted in what is mutually agreed to be the most appropriate training environment based on individual's needs. This training may take place around the person's home/work and local environment, in our residential training facility, or a combination of both.

OUR SERVICES ARE FREE OF CHARGE

Like all of Guide Dogs Victoria's services, the Acquired Brain Injury Mobility Service is provided entirely free of charge to clients. This includes accommodation where appropriate. If the client's program is funded by a Government agency such as the Transport Accident Commission or Veterans' Affairs or is subject to a court case, the Acquired Brain Injury Mobility Service will seek reimbursement from the relevant agency with permission from the client. Information regarding claim numbers, or pension numbers, in these cases would be appreciated when the referral is made.

TRAINING FOR ALLIED HEALTH STAFF

The Acquired Brain Injury team also conduct "Living with Acquired Brain Injury and Vision Loss" information days for people with an Acquired Brain Injury and their families. A similar session is available for professionals. The Acquired Brain Injury team also provides in-service training to hospital therapy staff on Acquired Brain Injury and vision loss and the services provided.



REFERRAL PROCESS

We welcome all enquiries from individuals, family members and health professionals.

Upon making an enquiry, you or the person referred will be given the opportunity to have a confidential discussion with one of our friendly and experienced staff members regarding their needs. This is a simple and non-threatening process with no cost, obligation or pressure to proceed with our services.

Family members are welcome to attend at any stage of the enquiry or training process and where appropriate, may stay at our residential training facility to provide additional support during this time.

For further information or to make a referral contact:

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