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Blind Citizens Australia

## Recommendations Arising from the

## Submission to the UN Special Rapporteur

## on Violence Against Women

In recognition that violence occurs and is a consequence of unequal gender relations, and lack of recognition of human rights, and intersection with other areas of discrimination, further marginalising blind and vision impaired women, Blind Citizens Australia recommends that:

1. Initiatives be encouraged securing the equality, independence, autonomous decision-making, participation and leadership of blind and vision-impaired women in all areas of Australian society
2. The encouragement of a coordinated approach to upholding the rights of blind women to safety from violence based on partnerships among blind women, blindness, disability sector and generic government, private and community agencies
3. In recognition of the greater prevalence of vision-impairment within Aboriginal communities, and the greater marginalisation and invisibility experienced by vision-impaired women in indigenous, CALD and GLBTI communities, commitment by government, private and community sector organisations to ensure violence prevention and response services are accessible to and meet the specific needs of these groups
4. Governments, legal, community and private institutions recognise the intersectionality of discrimination due to gender, vision-impairment and/or other disability, socio-economic, CALD and indigenous status and age
5. The resourcing of partnerships and initiatives bringing together disability sector, government and social, legal and private institutions and organisations to address barriers in the prevention of and response to violence against women who are blind
6. In accordance with a human rights framework and in response to Australia’s obligations under international and national human rights instruments, place women who are blind at the centre of design, implementation and review of violence prevention and response mechanisms
7. The Removal barriers to blind women’s access to information regarding their rights and entitlements, as well as specific information relating to violence response services by:
* Resourcing and education of violence support services to ensure their information is provided in a wide range of accessible formats, and the adherence of online information to universal international web accessibility guidelines
* Coordinated efforts by blindness organisations, technology distributors, all levels of government and the community and private sector to increase the accessibility of public internet facilities to blind women, e.g. through provision of screen reading/magnification software on public library computers
* Partnerships between blindness agencies and community/educational institutions to ensure women have access to training in adaptive technology use
1. The Increase of blind women’s access to independent and autonomous transport by:
* Adequate provision of subsidies/payments to allow taxi use
* Adequately resource and legislate for the adherence to accessibility standards of public and private transport providers
* Resource specific family violence support services to subsidise transport costs to ensure access by women with disabilities
1. The reduction of blind women’s economic disadvantage by removing barriers to fulfilling and sustainable employment opportunities
2. The adherence of refuge accommodation to standards of disability access to premises
3. The Removal barriers to blind women’s access to legal institutions by:
* Provision of information concerning legal rights and entitlements in a range of accessible formats, and in compliance with universal web accessibility guidelines
* Renewed commitment by governments/private sector to resourcing of legal aid and community legal services such that the specific needs of blind women can be identified, and responses planned, implemented and evaluated
* Increase viability of the use of electronic and accessible legal document preparation and lodgement systems conducive to the independent access of blind women able to use adaptive technology
* Adequately resource judicial authorities to increase the accessibility of courts/other dispute resolution premises to meet building accessibility standards and implement wayfinding technology to increase independent access by blind women
* Resource judicial institutions’ provision of assistance in the form of legal aid/other support staff

1. The resourcing of blind women’s access to specific programs, initiatives and services promoting gender, disability, socio-economic cultural and sexual equality and leadership opportunities through provision of information and other activities tailored to the accessibility and needs of blind women
2. The introduction of stronger incentives/penalties to ensure blind women’s participation in leadership roles within blindness specific, disability and general community organisations
3. The provision to blind women of accessible information and supports to make independent choices regarding living arrangements, relationships, family life and community involvement
4. A review of the design and implementation of service initiatives such as NDIS and MAC to ensure that implementation does not disadvantage women experiencing situations of violence
5. The resourcing of blind women’s representative organisations to adequately present the lived experiences, needs and views of blind women in relation to violence within media and public discourse and policy-making in the area of violence against women
6. Promotion of the collection of specific data relating to vision-impaired women’s experiences of public and family violence by judicial authorities and service providers.