

# BCA CEO Deb Deshayes standing in front of a display board showcasing pamphlets about BCA’s advocacy work and employment program Eye to the Future. Blind Citizens Australia July 2023 - June 2024 Year in Review

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Cover Image Description: BCA CEO Deb Deshayes standing in front of a display board showcasing pamphlets about BCA’s advocacy work and employment program Eye to the Future.

Blind Citizens Australia (BCA) is the National representative organisation of people who are blind or vision impaired.

Our purpose is to inform, connect, and empower Australians who are blind or vision impaired and the broader community.

BCA acknowledges the traditional owners of the land where we work and live. We pay our respects to elders past, present, and future and celebrate their stories, culture and traditions.

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# Overview

In another year of personnel change, and planning for funding changes at the end of the financial year, BCA continued to fulfill its purpose in 2023-24 and implement its Strategic Plan, with board, staff and members working creatively to achieve our goals.

Sally Karandrews (Aurisch) served as CEO of BCA until October 2023, having announced her resignation in July of that year. Sally joined BCA in 2017, initially taking on project roles before becoming General Manager of Projects and Engagement. She was appointed CEO in January 2022. Under her leadership, BCA developed a new strategic plan, strengthened partnerships with key blindness service provider organisations, and increased member engagement. Sally also ensured that BCA's voice was prominent across various forums, while providing ongoing support to staff and volunteers.

BCA was proud to continue its legacy of having a CEO with lived experience and welcomed Deb Deshayes as the new CEO in October 2023, following a thorough open recruitment process. Deb had previously served as General Manager of Projects and Engagement from January 2022 to July 2023. With a strong focus on member and partner engagement, Deb is committed to fostering a positive team culture, driving continued organisational strength and leading through change.

From a governance perspective, BCA’s board, led by Fiona Woods, completed an update of the Constitution, BCA’s overarching governing document. The Constitution update was passed at a Special General Meeting, following consultation with members. We thank BCA’s directors, members who provided feedback and input, and Baker McKenzie for their review and advice of this important document.

BCA’s policy and advocacy work continued to focus on the Disability Royal Commission, as the Commission handed down their final report in September 2023. At the same time, the federal government completed a review of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. BCA was funded to engage with members on this review, facilitating 4 online, and 7 in-person consultations across Australia, in Perth, Melbourne, Adelaide, Hobart, Canberra, Sydney and Brisbane.

BCA was pleased to formalise its partnership with the Jeffrey Blyth Foundation, signing a Memorandum of Understanding, to promote a focus on further fundraising, developing a bequest program and continuing the BCA Hugh Jeffrey Scholarships program. We were delighted to support three applicants to the BCA Hugh Jeffrey scholarship program in this financial year.

In the final year of project funding through the Department of Social Services Independence, Linkages and Capacity-Building program, BCA prioritised building its volunteer base to enable us to continue the Peer Connect groups, BCA Inform and BCA Conversations and to support branch leaders after the funding came to a close.

## Staffing

Over the 2023 to 2024 financial year, BCA employed 22 staff, and 3 contractors of which 15 are blind or vision impaired, have lived experience, or have disability.

Sally Karandrews (Aurisch) served in the role of CEO until October 2023, after announcing her resignation in July 2023.

Deb Deshayes commenced as BCA’s CEO in October 2023.

The CEO works in collaboration with the board to develop and direct organisational strategy, represents BCA on government access committees, liaises with our partner organisations, the disability sector and develops strategic alliances with key stakeholders. The CEO also has oversight of finance, risk management, all national events, including the 50th anniversary convention, and organisational leadership.

The role of Company Secretary is shared between the CEO and General Manager Operations, as per the Constitution.

Angela Jaeschke, BCA’s General Manager Operations oversees the Policy and Advocacy, and Projects and Engagement teams, as well as the Communications, IT and administration roles.

The BCA team came together in person in Melbourne in February 2024, with an opportunity to connect with professional development, training, sharing important updates, and build stronger social connections.

BCA would like to thank all staff, contractors, and volunteers for their commitment and significant efforts in supporting BCA’s work in this past year.

## Sustainability and Growth

### Funding and finance

BCA continued to convene the Finance Audit and Risk Management (FARM) committee this financial year, overseeing BCA’s finances and investments. BCA acknowledges and thanks Treasurer Andrew Webster for his significant contributions and chairing the FARM committee.

We would also like to extend our thanks to Mick Baker and Rocco Cutri for continuing as external representatives on the FARM this year, and to Lee Chong and Joanne Chua for their roles as board representatives on the FARM committee.

Full details of BCA’s finances and the Independent Auditors Report are contained in our "Financial and Audit Report 2023 to 2024" available on our website, or in your preferred format on request.

### Funding partners

BCA would like to thank and acknowledge the following departments, organisations and individuals for their support and commitment to the work of BCA:

Jeffrey Blyth Foundation

Shirley Fund

Vision Australia

Guide Dogs Australia

EverAbility

Department of Social Services (DSS) – directly and via AFDO consortium

Victorian Government through Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH)

Community Broadcasting Foundation (CBF)

National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)

NSW Government through Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ)

Melbourne Lord Mayor’s Charitable Foundation

Peter Goebel Bequest

BCA Backers – members who make regular monthly donations

Members who donated in response to BCA member appeals.

### Partnerships and collaborations

During the year, the board maintained its strong commitment to building and maintaining strategic relationships.

BCA continued to collaborate with partner organisations in the blindness sector, meeting with the CEOs and their representatives, to work towards a common aim of upholding and enhancing the rights of people who are blind or vision impaired.

BCA also enjoyed collaborations with the broader blindness sector, disability sector, and beyond. Below is a list of BCA’s partnerships and collaborations:

Vision Australia

Guide Dogs Australia

EverAbility

Vision 2020 Australia

Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO)

Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN)

Disability Representative Carer Organisations

Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC)

Justice Connect

Jeffrey Blyth Foundation

Baker McKenzie

# How we Informed

We continued our commitment to providing high-quality, accessible information that meets the needs of our members as demonstrated by the following highlights:

## BCA Websites

BCA’s websites continued to provide updated information, resources and updates to members and the wider community.

BCA’s main website [www.bca.org.au](http://www.bca.org.au) includes information about Blind Citizens Australia and its policy and advocacy work. It also includes information on how members can get involved with BCA, as well as including BCA publications and event recordings, and hosting the New Horizons podcast.

BCA’s website had 24,000 active users over the year.

BCA’s An Eye to the Future website [www.eyetothefuture.com.au](https://www.eyetothefuture.com.au/home/) includes career resources for jobseekers who are blind or vision impaired, as well as employer resources to change perceptions and highlight the skills, knowledge and diversity that people who are blind or vision impaired bring to the workplace.

## Social Media

All of BCA’s social media platforms have continued to grow throughout the past twelve months. We engage with our members through social media to promote BCA events, post updates on our advocacy and policy work, as well as to build awareness in the broader community on a range of policy and advocacy issues.

Our LinkedIn page has been used more frequently this year to promote workplace inclusion and accessibility to employers and businesses, including promoting BCA’s An Eye to the Future project which supports employers to expand and diversify their workforce.

BCA’s Facebook page had a reach of 21,800, which was up over 100 per cent from the previous year, this included 4,800 visits, and an increase of 205 followers.

Below are the links to follow BCA on social media:

[BCA on Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/BlindCitizensAustralia)

[BCA on X (formerly Twitter)](https://x.com/au_BCA)

[BCA on LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/blindcitizensaustralia/posts/?feedView=all)

[BCA on YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/@blindcitizensaustralia769)

## Member Engagement

Member engagement is one of our biggest priorities at BCA. The input and collaboration that we receive from our members contribute to the work of BCA both in terms of the content we produce and the services, programs, and events we provide.

### Blind Citizens News

Blind Citizens News is BCA’s flagship publication, which is sent to all members in their preferred format.

In 2023-24, one edition of BC News was published in Winter 2024. We introduced BCA’s CEO Deb Deshayes with a discussion on Deb’s leadership philosophy. Some of BCA’s peer and social groups were highlighted, and stories from members were shared, to promote new perspectives and celebrate achievements. BCA’s 50th Anniversary year in 2025 was promoted to share the planning for a celebratory convention mid-year, and to encourage contributions for this milestone event.

### New Horizons

New Horizons is BCA’s National, weekly radio program and podcast. It covers topics relevant to people who are blind or vision impaired.

Hosted by Vaughn Bennison, New Horizons featured regular updates from BCA on staffing changes, projects, events, branch updates, and our advocacy and policy work throughout the year, as well as episodes about NDIS and Aged Care reform, accessibility in higher education, barriers to information on the Voice to Parliament, and emergency response planning. New Horizons also welcomed members who shared their stories and experiences through interviews.

New Horizons is broadcast via the RPH Network and community radio stations across Australia. It is also available as a podcast on [BCA’s website](https://new-horizons.pinecast.co/) and through the Vision Australia Library service.

### Member Update

The [Member Update](https://www.bca.org.au/2021/01/27/member-update/) is our weekly newsletter to members containing information about upcoming events and opportunities at BCA and across the sector. With BCA’s focus on member engagement and information sharing, the Member Update is currently circulated to 1,736 people each week who are subscribed to BCA’s announcements email list.

The Member Update includes information and updates on BCA’s projects, branch activities, events, as well as updates from the sector, and information on accessible community events. We know that a lot of our members rely on this weekly update and it’s terrific to see more people subscribe to BCA’s announcements email list each month.

### Phone-based information

BCA’s inbound and outbound text messaging service continues to enable members to receive immediate and timely information about current BCA activities and serves as a pathway to provide feedback and ask questions via text message. This is particularly critical for people who are Deafblind or those who have other access barriers.

BCA’s web-based phone system not only facilitates remote working for our staff, but it also provides members and other stakeholders with information about current BCA activities, campaigns and events via the interactive menu. Callers can also provide anonymous feedback via the system.

### BCA Inform

BCA Inform is a platform for members to come together each month online to learn about and discuss issues of importance. As well as updates from BCA, guest presenters provided a unique insight to partnerships and work being done to improve access. Between 19 and 45 people attended each Inform event, with a total attendance of 244 in this reporting year. Each session was recorded and available on demand via BCA’s website.

Topics this year included:

* Challenges with Taxis and Rideshare
* Standing for election at BCA
* NDIS Review
* Voice to Parliament Referendum
* Responding to the Disability Royal Commission
* Disability Support Pension and Age Pension (Blind)
* Automated Vehicles
* Digital Inclusion
* Blindness Service Providers
* Employment
* NDIS Post-Budget Update

# How we Connected

## Events

BCA continued to engage with members via BCA Conversations - an online event for our members to regularly connect with their peers and discuss different topics. Some of the conversations this year have celebrated NAIDOC Week, informed about Macular Month, hosted a series of conversations on language and identity, consulted on the NDIS review, education accessibility, social media accessibility, and our CEO’s initiative to hold group conversations with BCA's leadership team and board.

BCA’s Trivia nights on Saturday evenings have continued to be a popular way of connecting online in a social setting, with an average of 20 to 25 participants each week. We thank all Trivia hosts, members, staff and board who made this possible.

This year, BCA continued to engage with younger members aged 18 to 34 years. To more effectively facilitate communication, a Discord channel was developed, with a page for introductions, as well as opportunities for social connection, tech or gaming tips, and general topics of interest. This has proven to be a popular way for BCA’s younger members to engage with each other.

BCA celebrated our member volunteers during National Volunteer Week in May in an online event, where their important contributions to the organisation were acknowledged.

BCA Connect in September 2023 had a focus on our Policy work. Our one-day online conference launched BCA’s online Policy and Advocacy Hub, hosted on BCA’s website – a refresh of our policy and advocacy resources.

We were thrilled to have over 60 people attend the event.

The chair of BCA’s National Policy Committee, Prue Watt, hosted the event, promoting the committee and their work.

Risk reduction, resilience and response: preparing for emergency events as a person who is blind or vision impaired was presented by BCA’s Policy Officer, and a session on Health was also featured.

We heard from members who presented recommendations on BCA’s future work and priority areas.

We also celebrated and recognised the contributions of BCA members to the blindness sector and to BCA. Congratulations to Ben Clare who received the David Blyth Award, Barbara Gudgionwho received the Diana Braun Aspirations Award, and Karen Knight who received the BCA Certificate of Appreciation.

## Peer Connect Groups

BCA’s [Peer Connect groups](https://www.bca.org.au/events/peer-connect-groups/) are designed to enable members to catch up with others online to discuss a shared interest, hobby, or passion, and to share tips and tricks on particular topics.

This year, ten groups met at least monthly, each group hosted by a BCA member. Most groups also have an email list to promote discussion and information sharing between sessions. Topics this year, included music, gardening, book club, assistive technology, guitar, young ambassadors, parenting, acquired sight loss, business connect, and journey to employment. Thanks to the Lord Mayor’s Charitable Foundation, BCA was able to expand and support our Peer Connect groups.

## International Work

BCA engages internationally primarily through memberships of the Pacific Disability Forum (PDF) and the World Blind Union (WBU), particularly in the Asia Pacific region (WBUAP), in which Australia is located.

This year, Blind Citizens Australia (BCA) continued its involvement in global initiatives through participation in the World Blind Union (WBU) and maintained representation on other relevant international committees.

The WBU Asia Pacific Region's Midterm General Assembly took place in Phuket, Thailand, in November 2023. BCA was represented in person by Helen Freris, a member of the Australian delegation, with additional Australian observers attending virtually in this hybrid-format assembly. The Regional General Assembly drafted and adopted the "Phuket Declaration," which calls on governments, corporate bodies, and regional organisations to uphold international disability legislation. This declaration aims to promote the physical and digital accessibility needed for equal participation of people who are blind or vision impaired in all aspects of civil and political life. The Phuket Declaration is available at: <https://wbuap.org/archives/1595>.

BCA holds a prominent role in the governance of the WBU Asia Pacific region. Ben Clare serves as the Oceania Subregional Chair, Robyn McKenzie as the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI) representative and member of the WBUAP Communications Committee, and Helen Freris as a regional board member.

In September 2023, BCA proudly presented Ben Clare with the David Blyth Award in recognition of his substantial contributions and over 20 years of dedication to enhancing the lives of people who are blind or have low vision in the Pacific Region. We warmly congratulate Ben on this achievement.

As a voting member of the Pacific Disability Forum (PDF), BCA remains actively involved, contributing as resources allow. In May, BCA attended a Melbourne meeting with PDF staff, part of their "Growing Stronger Together" initiative. This project aims to enhance the governance and operational capacity of smaller PDF member organisations, with support from larger organisations in Australia and New Zealand. BCA looks forward to future opportunities to contribute to this important work.

Additionally, BCA participated in the Vision 2020 Global Committee, which focuses on promoting clinical low vision services and advocacy throughout our region.

## Branches

BCA has ten branches around Australia, each serving the needs of members in particular regions or with special interests. Our branches are run by volunteers and over the past year we have been busy creating new resources for our branches and branch leaders.

BCA’s branches hold in person and online events throughout the year, and we encourage our members to get involved with branches in their area to connect with their peers and to attend events. You can find out more about our branches and how you can get involved on [the BCA website](https://www.bca.org.au/branches/).

Our sincere thanks to branch leaders, committee members, volunteers and to all those who contribute to the work of our branches. In doing so, you provide our members with opportunities to connect with and learn from one another and to collectively advocate for changes which make a tangible difference in their local communities.

## External Representation

BCA staff attend many external events to represent BCA, including speaking at conferences, as well as participating in panel discussions and workshops. Below is a list of external events where BCA was represented by its staff:

* AFDO – Disability Advocacy Conference – October 2023
* Australian Banking Association – Launch of Accessibility and Inclusion Principles for Banking Services
* By Us, For Us Disability Messaging session
* Consultation by DSS on Disability Services and Inclusion Bill
* Consultation by Independent Broad-based Anti-Corruption Commission (IBAC) regarding Victoria’s gambling reform and handling of corruption from a disability perspective
* consultations with Telstra about their Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system and Ruby Pilot Program designed to support people with disabilities with their inquiries, complaints
* Mastercard Launch of ‘Touch’ movie with Westpac
* Meeting with the Hon Michelle Rowland (Minister for Communications) regarding Audio Description
* NDIS Provider and Worker Registration Taskforce Roundtable
* NSW Disability Policy Interagency Meeting
* Public Hearing for NSW Joint Standing Committee of Electoral Matters
* Public Hearing for Victorian Legislative Assembly's Economy and Infrastructure Committee - Inquiry into Impact of Road Safety Behaviours on Vulnerable Road Users
* Regular AFDO Member Policy Forums
* Round Table on Information Access for People with Print Disability – presentation Emergency Preparedness
* Services Australia Vulnerability Workshop
* Victoria Police Accessibility Action Plan
* Vision 2020 Australia Discussion Workshops on topics including: NDIS Reforms, new Aged Care Act, new Disability Services and Inclusion Act, Provider and Workforce Registration Taskforce

  
Image description: Left to right: BCA CEO Deb Deshayes, BCA President Fiona Woods and Minister for the NDIS/Minister for Government Services Bill Shorten

### Committees and working groups

BCA receives many invitations to participate on committees and working groups. These committees and working groups engage the disability sector in a conversation on accessibility in a range of government and business sectors and projects. These included:

* Assistance Animal Advisory Committee - Taxi and Rideshare Services (AACTRS)
* Assistive Technologies for All (ATFA) Alliance
* Australian Disability + Development Consortium
* Australian Banking Association
* Australian Electoral Commission Disability Advisory Committee
* Australian Federation Disability Organisations (AFDO) Members Forum
* Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO) Policy Network Forum
* Canberra Blind Society
* Community Stakeholder Update (NDIS)
* Dept. Social Services DRO Forum
* DFFH Emergency Preparedness and Engagement Forum
* Disability and Health Sector Consultation Committee (DHSCC)
* Disability Interagency Policy Group
* DSP (Disability Support Pension) Peak Body
* DSS - Australian Disability Strategy (ADS)
* DSS – DRO working group (Accessible Communication)
* DSS Joint Quality Framework and Participant Experience Reference Groups
* Equal Access to Democracy (EAD) Disability Reference Group (NSW Electoral Commission)
* Micromobility Discussions (Lime, Neuron, Beam, Ario, etc)
* National Disability Data Asset (NDDA) DPI Working Group
* NDIA - Dog Guides Advisory Group
* NDIA – Joint Advocacy Co Design Steering Committee
* NDIA DRCO Forum
* NDIA East - NSW and ACT monthly Virtual community update
* NDIS Quality and Safeguards
* NDIS/Vision2020 Stakeholders Meeting
* NSW Accessible Transport Advisory Committee
* NSW Disability Advocacy Network (NDAN)
* NSW/ACT NDIA monthly updates
* Pacific Disability Forum
* Project Aria Reference Group
* Parramatta Light Rail project
* Round Table on Information Access for People with Print Disability
* Services Australia Disability & Payment Capacity Branch
* Services Australia & DSS Disability Peak Bodies Network
* Tasmanian Electoral Commission Working Group
* Telecommunications Ombudsman Consumer Panel
* Victorian Accessible Transport Advisory Committee (ATAC)
* Victoria Police Disability Portfolio Reference Group
* Victorian Education Committee - Disability Stakeholders Reference Group
* Victorian Electoral Access Advisory Group
* Vision 2020 Australia Mental Health Committee
* Vision 2020 Australia Independence and Participation Committee (IPC)
* Vision 2020 Global
* Vision Australia
* World Blind Union - Australian Delegate
* World Blind Union Asia Pacific Executive
* Yarra Trams Reference Committee.

# How We Empowered

## Individual Advocacy

Individual advocacy involves supporting people to exercise their rights by providing assistance to voice their concerns, access information, resolve issues, or to identify support options available to them.

This year, BCA closed over 90 individual advocacy cases, as well as providing information and advice to approximately 20 people each month on how to self-advocate.

Our staff provided advocacy on many issues, including:

* NDIS access, plans and reviews
* Making an Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) application
* Support at the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT)
* Access to My Aged Care
* Dog guide access
* Immigration to Australia
* Pedestrian safety, including Tactile Ground Surface Indicators (TGSIs)
* Access to housing
* Access to education
* Access to the Multi-Purpose Taxi Program (MPTP)
* Website accessibility
* Access to audio description information and service
* Hospital access
* Access to banking
* Access to support workers
* Access to billing
* Support in the criminal justice system
* Disparity between NDIS and My Aged Care.

## National Policy Committee (NPC)

One of BCA’s great strengths as a Disability Representative Organisation (DRO) is the existence of the National Policy Committee (NPC), a constitutionally established standing committee of the BCA board, intended to drive the formation and review of the organisation’s public policy output.

The NPC provides a conduit by which the views of the BCA membership on matters of public policy can be articulated to the BCA board and acts as an important sounding board for the BCA Policy Team.

A main priority for the NPC this year included the update of BCA’s Policy and Advocacy Hub – where BCA’s policy reports, position papers, submissions, resources and information are available to members and the public.

Policy reports on Accessible Voting, Emergency Preparedness and Response, and updated position statements on Audio Description, Electric & Hybrid Vehicles, Employment, and Personal Mobility Devices were developed by BCA’s Policy Officer, in collaboration with the NPC.

Thank you to Prue Watt, NPC chair until December 2023, and Francois Jacobs, NPC chair from January 2024 for supporting this valuable work, which has been busier than ever over the past twelve months.

Thank you also to members of the NPC and the many members who provided feedback to our consultations and ensuring our policies reflect the needs and interests of Australians who are blind or vision impaired.

## Campaigns

### Audio Description

BCA has continued to work with the sector to continue a dialogue with the Public Broadcasters (ABC and SBS), Free to Air Australia, and the Federal Minister for Communications, Michelle Rowland MP, to further raise awareness and promote the ongoing funding and expansion of AD on Australian TV.

BCA celebrated with the ABC in July 2023, with the launch of audio description on their streaming platform, iView.

### Banking

BCA continued regular meetings with Australian banks as well as the Australian Banking Association to promote accessibility in banking products and services more generally.

These groups and networks also provided a flow on effect to BCA’s Individual Advocacy work by creating opportunities for BCA advocates to speak directly to senior bank staff to progress a case.

### Accessibility of touchscreen EFTPOS devices

BCA continued conversations with various banks to ensure they implement accessible solutions to touchscreen EFTPOS devices. In addition, BCA staff met with representatives of HICAPS, for a demonstration of a new EFTPOS terminal that will be rolled out across health practices nationwide.

### Elections and voting

BCA has continued to advocate for the rights of people who are blind or vision impaired to participate in elections by casting a secret, independent, and verifiable vote.

During this reporting period, this advocacy work has included: ongoing representation at various advisory committees set up by the State and Federal Electoral Commissions, an appearance before the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, a presentation on accessible voting at the Roundtable for Print Disability, and several submissions at a State and Federal level.

**Taxi and rideshare refusal**

In early 2023, BCA joined with Guide Dogs Australia, Dog Guide Handlers Australia, Assistance Dogs Australia, and Travel Paws to form the Assistance dogs Advisory Committee for Taxi and Rideshare Services (AACTRS). This group was established to ensure a united approach in ongoing initiatives focussed on preventing and eliminating refusals in taxi and rideshare services in Australia for people with approved assistance dogs.

The work of AACTRS is ongoing but has already led to a joint response to the Review of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport (DSAPT).

## Submissions

The following is a summary of submissions made by BCA during the reporting period:

Response to the 2022 Review of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport

Submission to the NDIS Review

Response to the Alternative Commonwealth Capabilities for Crisis Response Discussion Paper

Feedback on the Digital ID Bill 2023 and the Digital ID Rules 2024

Response to the Aviation Green Paper

Feedback on the National Road Transport Technology Strategy

Response to the Disability Royal Commission Final Report (New South Wales)

Response to the Disability Royal Commission Final Report (Commonwealth)

Submission to the Senate Economics Legislation Committee’s Inquiry into Digital ID Bill 2023

Submission to the Inquiry into NDIS Participant Experience in Rural, Regional and Remote Australia

Response to the Aged Care Bill 2023

Submission to the Inquiry into the Transition to Electric Vehicles

Feedback on the NDIS Amendment Bill 2024

Submission to the NDIS Provider and Worker Registration Task Force

Response to the Proposed Automated Vehicle Safety Reforms.

## BCA Projects

### [An Eye to the Future](https://eyetothefuture.com.au/accessibility-and-inclusion-beyond-2020/)

BCA’s An Eye to the Future Project Team have worked through another rewarding and productive year with both candidates and businesses.

We supported job seekers to identify and apply for roles advertised in industries of interest, resume and cover letter preparation, interview skills and support as they settle into the role.

Six Job Ready online workshops were held, with 56 attendees across these workshops.

Peer Connect groups and a BCA Inform also had a focus on employment.

Feedback from candidates receiving job ready support has included:

One candidate has reflected on the skills gained through An Eye to the Future as they confidently (and successfully) applied for a fulltime role using the knowledge from their first applications with our support. They noted that these are skills they will keep with them for life.

Feedback after discussing cover letter and resumes with candidates include “The support I received from [project officer] regarding the resume and the cover letter was extremely helpful and insightful”, ‘Gives me hope’ and another candidate taking the skills and independently applying them to new applications to achieve fulltime work.

Feedback post-employment contract stated that they felt supported by An Eye the Future and “I was able to gain experience in a workplace and improve my skills in website updates and communication via the phone”.

Connecting with businesses and increasing the awareness, capability, and overall willingness to employ someone who is blind or vision impaired has remained a priority for the An Eye to the Future team. We hosted five business workshops and nine targeted lunchbox sessions with over 200 total attendees, with an additional 120 people accessing the videos online after the events.

Feedback from organisations from our lunchbox sessions and business workshops has included:

‘Excellent short and informative session. First online session I have done where I got something out of the session.’

‘I thought this was a wonderful session with content that was well targeted so as to arm the attendees with simple skills around consideration and cultural change in order to provide broader inclusion and quality of work life for staff who are blind or living with a vision impairment.’

‘Great session, [presenter] was really knowledgeable and I feel more confident now about how I can be more inclusive in the workplace.’

‘Information was presented in a manageable way and well explained. Some strategies that were suggested are useful in all circumstances and not limited only to people with vision impairment. It demonstrated how easy it is to be inclusive of all people.’

‘I thought this was a wonderful session with content that was well targeted to arm the attendees with simple skills around consideration and cultural change in order to provide broader inclusion and quality of work life for staff who are blind or living with a vision impairment. I found the 'close your eyes' part of the session particularly impactful. Thanks [presenter]!’

‘It was a great session and [presenter] did a great job explaining everything and allowing attendees to feel comfortable. Thank you!’

‘It was good to be reminded and to appreciate how behaviours in the workplace can impact others.’

Below are the links to follow An Eye to the Future on social media:

[An Eye to the Future Website](https://www.eyetothefuture.com.au/home/)

[An Eye to the Future on Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/EyeToTheFutureBCA/)

[An Eye to the Future on YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/@eyetothefuture7415)

### Community Broadcasting Foundation Audio Production Project Following on from a successful project in early 2023, BCA was again funded by the Community Broadcasting Foundation, with support from Vision Australia, to run an audio production project.

The objective of this project was to equip interested BCA members with the skills and opportunity to produce audio for radio and other distribution, such as podcasting.

Led by Stephen Jolley, and Project Managed by Bettina Twyman, this project had two training phases:

1. Online concepts session conducted over one day or two half-day sessions.
2. In person one and a half day training in the Digital Audio Workstation tool Reaper.

21 participants (10 women and 11 men), aged from late teens to late 60s, from ACT, NSW, Victoria, Queensland, WA and Tasmania attended the Concepts Training sessions.

The Concepts training covered:

1. Five stages of audio product development.
2. Break out groups beginning the design a radio / podcast series that meets certain criteria.
3. Pre-recorded presentations from experienced audio creators who are blind or vision impaired.
4. Explanation of the audio process chain from capture of initial sound, through digital processing to presentation to the ear of the listener.
5. Broadcast Tips including microphone techniques, presentation style, and interviewing approaches and techniques.
6. Explanation of software and hardware tools.

The in-person training had 7 participants (3 women and 4 men) who were joined by Vaughn Bennison who led the group through training on how to use the digital audio workstation program, Reaper. The training was held at Vision Australia’s site at Kooyong.

The training covered:

1. Theory of recording.
2. Overview of Reaper.
3. An exercise in recording.
4. An exercise in editing concepts.
5. An exercise in multi-track editing.
6. Management of levels and audio enhancement.
7. Rendering a project to an exportable file.

The project resulted in over 20 people having a good basic understanding of the concepts of audio production and 7 individuals now equipped to proceed to creating audio for community radio broadcast or podcast.

It has been a most productive introduction to audio production skill development. Every participant has progressed along the way to enhancing their audio production capability. Participants have had good exposure to the concepts of audio creation and valuable and practical experience of a highly regarded and widely used digital audio production tool. They will be able to progress to produce good quality audio for community radio and podcast.

Image description: A large table with the following people seated from left to right: Stephen Jolley, Stephen, Gabriel, PJ, Annette, Vaughn Bennison, Paul, Bettina Twyman, Steve, Helen and Deb Deshayes.

## Feedback

BCA welcomes feedback on all its work, including advocacy, services, projects, events, publications and communications.

# Closing Remarks

BCA has had another eventful and successful year, working to our vision and purpose of informing, connecting and empowering people who are blind or vision impaired and the wider community.

BCA’s achievements would not be possible without its members whose participation, attendance, input, and feedback guide our work.

Thank you for your support of BCA in 2023 to 2024. We look forward to your ongoing contributions towards another productive year ahead, as we celebrate BCA’s 50th anniversary.



Image Description: BCA President Fiona Woods and Vice-President Helen Freris sitting at a dining table next to each other.

## The BCA Team 2023 to 2024

### Directors

Stephen Belbin, Vice-president

Joanne Chua (until January 2024)

Lee Chong

Neale Huth (from December 2023)

Helen Freris, Vice President

Francois Jacobs

Robyn Mackenzie (from December 2023)

Doug McGinn (until July 2023)

Prue Watt (until December 2023)

Andrew Webster, Treasurer

Fiona Woods, President

### Finance, Audit and Risk Management Committee (FARM)

Andrew Webster, Chair

Mick Baker

Lee Chong

Joanne Chua (until January 2024)

Rocco Cutri

Sue Cutler, BCA Finance Manager (until September 2023)

Deb Deshayes, BCA Chief Executive Officer (from October 2023)

Angela Jaeschke, BCA General Manager - Operations

Sally Karandrews (Aurisch), BCA Chief Executive Officer (until October 2023)

Gwen Rai, BCA Finance Manager (from October 2023 – March 2024)

### National Policy Committee

Robert Altamore, ACT

Ross Hurford (from December 2023)

Neale Huth, Queensland

Francois Jacobs, Director, Chair (from December 2023)

Michael Janes, Victoria (until December 2023)

Debra Simons (from December 2023)

Stefan Slucki, Victoria

Nicola Stowe, New South Wales

Stephanie Sullivan (from December 2023)

Mark Warrington, Tasmania

Prue Watt OAM, Director and Chair (until December 2023)

Corey Crawford, BCA National Policy Officer

Jackson Reynolds-Ryan, BCA Manager, Policy and Advocacy

### Engage Committee

Stephen Belbin

Vaughn Bennison

Joanne Chua

Ben Clare

Helen Freris (co-chair)

Doug McGinn (co-chair)

Deb Deshayes, BCA General Manager Projects and Engagement

Sally Karandrews, BCA Chief Executive Officer

### 50th Anniversary Convention Committees

#### Program Committee

Sonya Dercksen

Annette Ferguson (co-Chair)

Michael Janes

Doug McGinn

Robyn McKenzie BCA director (co-Chair)

Katrina Taylor

#### Celebrations Committee

Stephen Belbin BCA Director (co-Chair)

Amy Curran

Lynne Davis (co-Chair)

John Hardie

Carmel Jolley

Susan Thompson

#### Logistics Committee

Amila Dedovic

Deb Deshayes

Angela Jaeschke

Samantha Marsh

Christina Micallef

### CEO Oversight Committee

Neale Huth

Robyn Mackenzie

Fiona Woods (President)

### BCA Staff

Executive Leadership Team

Deb Deshayes, Chief Executive Officer

Angela Jaeschke, General Manager - Operations

Christina Micallef, Executive Assistant

Communications

Amila Dedovic, Communications Coordinator

Administration Team

Samantha Marsh, Information and Administration Officer

Finance Team

Not for Profit Accounting Specialists (contractor)

IT

June Bennison (contractor)

Projects and Engagement Team

Bettina Twyman, Project Manager

Natasha Brake, Business Support Officer

An Eye to the Future Team

Madison Braim, Project Officer

Claire Dorling, Project Officer

Policy and Advocacy Team

Jackson Reynolds-Ryan, Policy and Advocacy Manager

Martin Stewart, National Advocacy Officer

Corey Crawford, National Policy Officer

Layal Hage, Engagement and Consultation Officer

Former BCA Staff who served in the 2023 to 2024 financial year

Sally Karandrews (Aurisch), Chief Executive Officer (until October 2023)

Jemma Arundel, Fundraising Manager (contractor) (April – May 2024)

Naomi Barber, Executive Assistant (until August 2023)

Erica Chiandotto, Project Officer Member Engagement (until July 2023)

Sue Cutler, Finance Manager (until September 2023)

Tim Davey, Eye to the Future Project Officer (until July 2023)

Tony Delmadoros, NSW / ACT Advocacy Projects Officer (until April 2024)

Deb Deshayes, General Manager Projects and Engagement (until July 2023)

Cheryl Gration, Admin Assistant (until November 2023)

Peta Hogan, Advocacy Projects Officer (until May 2024)

Gwen Rai, Finance Manager (September 2023 - March 2024)

BCA would also like to acknowledge and thank our volunteers for their work and commitment to the organisation.