

# ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY



## It's never too late or too early to seek mobility help and training

Guide Dogs Queensland values you as an individual and so tailors a personal program of your services and support programs that best suit our lifestyle and skill level.

Whether your vision impairment is the result of a congenital or inherited condition, age, stroke, or other serious injury or illness, we are available to teach you the skills required to maintain or regain independence.

For many of our clients, their first encounter with Guide Dogs Queensland is with one of our counselling staff who helps them and their families adjust to life with vision loss.

An Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Specialist is also available to assess and develop a mobility program with you, taking into account your strengths, abilities and individual learning style as you work to build confidence and safety during travel.

Programs are delivered free of charge in your home or at our Brisbane training centre and include:

- 🐾 White cane training (beginner, intermediate and advanced)
- 🐾 Guide Dog mobility
- 🐾 Electronic travel aids (MiniGuide, UltraCane, GPS Breeze)
- 🐾 Children's camps, and
- 🐾 Counselling retreats.



## Orientation and Mobility training

Orientation and Mobility training helps you develop knowledge, skills and strategies to safely move through a variety of environments, teaching skills ranging from safe road crossing techniques and use of public transport, to familiarisation with travel routes and shopping centre, campus or workplace layouts.

The training helps to develop sensory abilities such as hearing, touch and where possible the effective use of any residual vision.

Training often involves the use of specific aids such as the white cane or the latest in electronic travel aids such as the MiniGuide, UltraCane or GPS systems.

## Mobility aids

### White Canes

The most common type of white cane is the Long Cane, however there are white canes that serve primarily to identify the user as having a vision impairment (Identification Cane) or that provide needed physical support (Support Cane). Like our Guide Dogs, canes are





matched to the person's needs and lifestyle. The vast majority of Guide Dogs Queensland's clients use a white cane as their primary mobility aid.

## Guide Dogs

The decision to use a Guide Dog is one based on lifestyle. Not everyone wants the responsibility of a dog and there is much to consider in taking on this option.

Guide Dogs are carefully selected to match each client's lifestyle and travel needs. It's an involved process that considers both the person and the dog.

Clients must undergo an assessment process and we recommend they be able to use a Long Cane and have received mobility training before applying for a Guide Dog.

## Electronic travel aids

An electronic travel aid (ETA) is a form of assistive technology that aims to improve mobility for a person with vision impairment.

Our Client Services team is at the forefront of this field and offers expert advice and support on the latest range of ETAs available on the global market. Specially designed programs are held on-site at our Client Residence throughout the year, providing training on ETAs such as the UltraCane, MiniGuide and GPS Breeze.

Guide Dogs Queensland can also provide advice and support on new technology and practical aids – for use in the home, at work or out in the community.

Guide Dogs Queensland continues to trial our wide range of new electronic devices to ensure services remain at the forefront of Orientation and Mobility training.



### MiniGuide:

This hand-held sonar aid is a popular secondary mobility aid

that gives information about obstacles immediately ahead of the traveler via a vibration or audio alert.



### UltraCane:

This cane uses ultrasonic echoes – based on a

navigation process used by bats called echolocation – to convey information about the location of objects ahead of the user, including low hanging or head-height obstacles that cannot be detected by the Long Cane alone.



### GPS Breeze:

This hand-held GPS navigational

system includes talking digital maps and menus to help the user pinpoint their exact location and gain real-time information on their surroundings.

## Adaptive technology

Clients attending residential programs can learn about and trial the most up-to-date adaptive technology options available to people who are blind or have low vision. These include reading programs and low vision computer programs and equipment.

## Programs

### Special Education programs for children

Special Education programs are delivered within school environments, community settings, at home, and on Guide Dogs Queensland's holiday camps. Our instructors can work one-on-one with children through school outreach programs, before and after school.

Our group programs allow our younger clients to take part in week-long stays at the Brisbane training centre. Private rooms are provided, with a communal dining and eating area, and trained residential carers can deliver overnight care.

The programs are designed to build young people's confidence, promote social interaction, create new friendships and build necessary orientation and mobility skills.

## **Counselling and support**

Our counselling services, Volunteer Peer Support Program and support groups are designed to increase a person's independence in mobility and, just as importantly, overcome the isolation that often comes with losing sight. These services also promote social, emotional and physical wellbeing.

Counselling is provided to help clients and their families understand and adjust to life with vision loss. It can also improve a client's personal and social development. Counselling retreats are also offered throughout the year, with clients staying in our Client Residence at our Brisbane training centre.

## **Low Vision Support Groups**

Guide Dogs Queensland helps establish and promote support groups for people who are blind or vision impaired. Currently, we assist support groups throughout the State by providing up-to-date information, services and advice.

These support groups provide people who have experienced vision loss, with an opportunity to meet and share thoughts and ideas with others who are blind or have low vision.

## **Low vision clinics**

Guide Dogs Queensland also participates in regular state-wide Vision Assessment and Management Services (VAMS) low vision clinics. These clinics typically involve an O&M Specialist, Optometrist, Occupational Therapist, Social Worker, Ophthalmologist and Support Group and adaptive technology representatives.

These low vision clinics can provide advice on a wide range of new technology and practical aids that assist in the home, out shopping or for use in work or study environments.

The clinics provide a perfect opportunity to trial new technology in a comfortable environment, with no obligation to buy – giving you time to find the best tools to meet your needs.

## **Education, awareness and advocacy**

Guide Dogs Queensland also conducts a variety of community and professional education workshops about vision impairment. These can be adapted to medical and paramedical professionals, vision impairment program staff, carers and Home and Community Care (HACC) workers and school teachers.

Our expert staff members also consult for and advocate on behalf of Queensland's blind and vision impaired community in a number of government, educational and public sectors.

A Low Vision Mobility Expo is held every year at our Brisbane training centre during Disability Week, to help promote and educate on the wide range of services available to people with low or no vision.

**For further information about low vision support groups, clinics and workshops please Freecall 1800 810 122 or visit [guidedogsqld.com.au](http://guidedogsqld.com.au)**

*We are here to help please contact us*

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