# Vision Australia Election Priorities: Queensland 2020

## Vision Australia is calling on the next Queensland Government to build on work already done to improve the lives for Queenslanders who are blind or have low vision.

There are 75,000 Queenslanders who are blind or have low vision, 70,000 of these being of voting age. As Australians continue to live longer lives, we expect this number to rise.

## Priorities at a glance

1. [Commitment to equal employment opportunities](#_Equal_employment_opportunities)
2. [Equitable access to transport](#_Blind_and_low)
3. [Ongoing library funding](#_Ongoing_library_funding)

### Equal employment opportunities

**The Queensland Government has already committed to a disability employment target of 8% by 2022. Now is the time to lead the nation and ensure that commitment becomes reality.**

Meaningful employment is integral for all Queenslanders to maximise opportunities for participation in all aspects of life including economic security, buying or renting a home, access to goods and services and social participation.

Despite good intentions, people who are blind or have low vision still face significant barriers to both gaining and maintaining meaningful employment. Unfortunately, we know the unemployment rate of people who are blind or have low vision is the highest of all disability groups.

Across Australia only one in every four people who are blind or have low vision are in full time work.

Vision Australia commends the Queensland Government for leading the way and setting a disability employment target of 8% to be reached by 2022. Now is the time to make this employment target a reality by implementing three employment focused initiatives.

1. Queensland’s state disability inclusion plan is up for renewal

Vision Australia recommends as a part of that, a comprehensive standalone disability employment plan is developed for the public sector. A dedicated disability employment plan is needed to ensure the 8% disability employment target is achieved. Further, Vision Australia recommends Queensland’s online accessibility policy be included in the Disability Inclusion Plan. This will ensure by default public sector agencies have to report on their disability inclusion in their access and inclusion plans.
2. Lead the nation in online accessibility and accessible ICT procurement

Queensland has the opportunity to be leaders in online accessibility. Not only within the public service sector, but also by ensuring online accessibility for all services provided for by government. Included within this needs to be enhanced disability and digital accessibility awareness training across the public service.
3. Expand Queensland’s public service work experience and graduate programs targeting people with a disability

Vision Australia has worked with the Queensland Department of Health to facilitate the intake of candidates who are blind or have low vision into the Department’s work experience program recent years. This has been a successful collaboration, providing paid work experience for up to 12 people per intake. Expansion of this program would continue to positively impact people who are blind or have low vision as well as aid in the Queensland Government meeting the 8% disability employment target.

### Queenslanders who are blind or have low vision deserve fair and equitable access to transport

People who are blind or have low vision primarily rely on taxi, ride share and other modes of public transport as their main way of getting around and maintaining their independence and participation in society.

Vision Australia commends the work the Queensland Government has already done with the Federal Government, extending the Taxi Subsidy Scheme (TSS) for NDIS participants until 2021. It is now time to build upon this work.

Queenslanders who are blind or have low vision currently only receive a subsidy of $25, which is not commensurate with the $60 in states such as New South Wales and Victoria. The Queensland rate has not increased in over 25 years.

Without an increase to the TSS subsidy, all Queenslanders who are blind or have low vision and are not on the NDIS will continue to be unfairly impacted. This is particularly relevant for people over 65 who often can’t afford to travel outside their local area on the current subsidy rate.

Under the TSS people are also not able to utilise ridesharing options, which provide an affordable transport option. Queenslanders who are blind or have low vision should have equal right of access to the same ridesharing options as the rest of the Queensland community have.

The Queensland Government has the opportunity to continue to work collaboratively with the Federal Government to ensure Queenslanders who are blind or have low vision receive equitable access to transport, consistent with what is provided in other states.

#### Vision Australia proposes:

* Increasing the TSS amount to $60 per trip, in line with other states and territories.
* Expanding the use of the TSS to include other rideshare options
* Continue to lobby at the Disability Reform Council for improved transport funding for Queenslanders who rely on adequate access to public transport to live, work and play.

### Ongoing library funding

**The Vision Australia Library opens up a whole world of information to people who are blind or low vision, or have a print disability.**

Vision Australia provides a specialist library service for people who are blind or have low vision or have a print disability. While this is a national service, 92% of library members are based in just three states; Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. Of our 16,543 Library members, approximately 20% reside in Queensland.

Vision Australia’s Library offers a service unlike any other library in Queensland. This enables people who are blind or have low vision or have a print disability a supportive and inclusive library experience, in a similar way a sighted person is able to access support and information through a mainstream public library.

Our service offering in Queensland provides 59,000 fiction and non-fiction book titles as well as access to hundreds of newspapers, journals podcasts and magazines to people with a print disability. In addition we provide 8,000+ Braille and e-Braille titles and over 5,300 music Braille pieces.

Public libraries for the broader Queensland community are entirely government funded and library services for people who are blind or have low vision should be treated in the same way. The Vision Australia Library service is simply not sustainable without an ongoing funding commitment.

Vision Australia welcomed the one year of funding provided in June 2020 by the Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors. We know our library members did also. The Vision Australia Library is a critical service to blind and low vision Queenslanders and should be supported on an ongoing basis, as community libraries for broader Queenslanders are.

#### Vision Australia proposes

* Government to commit $350,000 per year to support Vision Australia’s Library services to Queenslanders who are blind or have low vision, or who have a print disability.
* For the Vision Australia Library to be funded as an inclusive library out of public library sources within the Department of Science and Environment similar to how it is funded across other states in Australia.