

Background accessibility information

Vision impairment

More than 40,000 Western Australians of all ages are blind or vision impaired. Only about 5% of people with vision impairment are totally blind. By 2020 there will be a 49% increase in the number of Australians living with blindness or vision loss.

People who are blind or vision impaired require access to the same facilities, services and information as the wider community. It is important when designing buildings and environments, which are accessible to people with vision impairment, that designers have an understanding of the various types of vision loss.

Eighty per cent of vision impaired Australians are over the age of 55 as the most common causes of low vision are associated with ageing. Given the projected growth in the number of people who are blind or vision impaired due to our aging population, there will be an increase in the demand for accessible facilities.

Low vision refers to a vision loss that is severe enough to impede performance of vocational, recreational, social, and independent living tasks, but still allows some useful visual discrimination. Low vision cannot be corrected to normal vision by regular eyeglasses or spectacles. The majority of people who are legally blind are included within the low vision classification.

Not everyone who is blind or vision impaired is the same. While some people who are blind have very little or no vision, most vision impaired people have some useful vision. Just because someone uses a white cane or a guide dog doesn't necessarily mean they can't see anything.

For people with vision impairment a continuous accessible path of travel should be clear of all obstacles including bollards, street furniture, landscaping, sandwich billboards and overhanging branches. Pathways should be colour contrasting to their surrounding. The borders of a path should also contrast (eg, to lawn, to garden beds). The use of colour contrasting tactile pavers or surface indicators is recommended as this provides visual and physical tactile feedback. Overhanging branches and bushes should be trimmed so they do not intrude on the walking area. Pathways should be kept clear of other obstacles such as bikes, bins, etc.

