

# Vision Australia's Life Ready program

**Believe what you can be**

A guide to how we can support children and young people who are blind or have low vision to reach their full potential.



**Vision Australia**

Blindness. Low Vision. Opportunity.



On the cover: Jasper, Vision Australia client and his mum.

Above: Bowdy, Vision Australia client.

# Contents

• Building strong foundations for life	4
• Introducing Vision Australia's Life Ready program	5
• When should we start the program?	6
• Nine Life Skill areas	7
• The three stages of the Life Ready program	10
• How we approach working together	14
• Our team of experts will be your guide	15
• Meet your Life Ready team of experts	16
• Services can be delivered in many different ways	17
• Vision Australia's extended support network	18
• How will you pay for it - Navigating funding	20
• Appendix one	22

# Building strong foundations for life

Every child is unique, and they interact and learn in their own wonderful way. Much of what we learn in life is through what we see, so children who are blind or have low vision need to gather information about their world in different ways.

Finding out your child has a vision condition can be a very confronting experience. You may have many questions about their future and the impacts the diagnosis will have on their day-to-day life.

Vision Australia is here to support children, young people, their families and carers in finding ways to get through the everyday and put in place great foundations for the future. Foundations help to build confidence and self-belief. Together we can assist you to make choices and build the skills which can lead to a more independent future for you child.

Whatever stage your family is at, whatever's most important to you and your child, we are here to help with our specialised services.



Hazel, Vision Australia client

# Introducing Vision Australia's Life Ready program

Vision Australia's Life Ready Program is designed to encourage and support childhood development and the education of children and young people who are blind or have low vision, so they can form strong foundations for life, true meaningful participation and life-long employment.

The program creates a safe, supportive environment to connect children and young people, aged 0 to 25, and their families to their peers so they can grow together; while a team of experts help them develop nine critical life skill areas.

The nine Life Skills areas are designed to equip them to take advantage of choices that could lead to a better future and the confidence to believe they can truly have the future they choose.

**Vision Australia's Life Ready Program: Education, Independence, Social Inclusion, Employment.**



Luna, Vision Australia client.

## When should we start the program?

Vision Australia believes every child is learning to become their future self from day one.

Which is why it's important to engage with us from day one.

Starting early gives your child the time to acquire skills, and learn strategies, to manage future obstacles.

Most importantly it gives your child time to build a level of belief, aspiration, even expectation of what is possible. To believe that, with the right education and support, they can get closer to, or ultimately live the life they choose.

**“When the boys were eight weeks old we were put in touch with Vision Australia. After that the specialists started coming out to the school or doing home visits to provide services to the boys. The support [from Vision Australia] has been everything, things like speech therapy and occupational therapy have made a huge difference. Even just the advice about what the boys would be able to do has made a huge difference.”**

**- Sonia, mum of Jack, Noah and Thomas**

## Nine Life Skill areas

The nine Life Skills that sit at the heart of this program are based on decades of experience and learning. These are the nine key areas children and young people who are blind or have low vision need to develop to ensure they have the foundations for learning and future independence.

You may have heard these described as the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC). The ECC is an internationally recognised curriculum used in many Australian schools to support their students who are blind or have low vision.

This cross-over is purposeful to ensure Vision Australia works closely with the Australian school system and other services used to support families with complex needs.

We will coach, support and work with you to develop the right skills for your family from introduction through to mastery across the three stages of our program.



Joshua, Vision Australia client.

# Nine Life Skills areas



## Compensatory access

Understanding strategies and equipment that can be used to compensate for not having full vision.



## Orientation and mobility

A focus on the strategies and equipment to problem solve, navigate and move through the world for true independence.



## Assistive technology

Understanding how to use technology to empower those who are blind or have low vision to read, write and achieve the same life outcomes as those with full sight.



## Independent living skills

A focus upon the tasks people do frequently, even daily, to take care of themselves and others, and to meet the demands of everyday life.



## Sensory efficiency

Developing a personal, individual understanding of how you utilise all your senses to interact well in everyday life, no matter the situation.



### Social interaction

Developing the unique skills needed to interact with others, to build and maintain relationships when you cannot rely on visual communication.



### Career education

Building the knowledge and skills needed to take on future life roles and duties such as being a friend, an employee or a parent to enable true, future meaningful participation.



### Self determination

Instilling the skills, knowledge and necessary self-confidence to make good choices and inspire children who are blind or have low vision to believe they can live the life they choose.



### Recreation and leisure skills

Enable active participation in healthy physical activity, hobbies and creative pursuits to relax and enjoy free time by themselves or with others.

Left hand side:  
Willow, Vision Australia client.

Right hand side:  
Parker, Vision Australia client.

# The three stages of the Life Ready program

Just like school, our program is designed to aid and support children and young people ages 0-25 at all levels of development.

Don't worry, any child can start at any age or stage of development. Our team will work with you to develop a program to help your child's individual needs.

1

**Early years**

**Strengthening the family unit**

Foundation building to get through the everyday and put plans in place for the future

2

**Primary school**

**Opening up your child's world**

Confidence building and aiding in how to socialise and make choices

3

**High school and beyond**

**Discover the future**

Cementing belief in their future and the skills to take hold of opportunities and choices in front of them

## FAQ

**Q. Does Vision Australia work with children with multiple disabilities?**

**A.** Absolutely. It is not uncommon for kids with low vision or blindness to have additional needs. We take pride in working with teams of specialists inside and outside of Vision Australia to address all of your needs and ensuring that your child is future ready. You may be interested in accessing our experts who have experience and knowledge in working with cortical/ cerebral visual impairment.



# 1

## Early years

### Strengthening the family unit

Foundation building to get through the everyday and put plans in place for the future

#### Core Content:

- Understanding what your child can see and how they will use their other senses to support their learning and development.
- Help on how to build strong connections and support bonding and attachment if your child can't respond to facial expressions.
- Providing tips and ways to help your child learn daily living skills like feeding and dressing when they can't learn by example.
- Fun ways to foster your child's imagination by experimenting and playing together through touch, taste, smell, movement, and sound.
- Starting early to teach your child to speak, listen, read and count to help your child learn to interact and communicate.
- Building the skills to be your child's coach and champion.
- Advice, care and support getting your child ready for early childhood education and school



Nicholas, Vision Australia client.



## 2

### Primary school

#### Opening up your child's world

Confidence building and aiding in how to socialise and make choices

#### Core Content:

- Starting to teach your child the skills they will need to be independent tomorrow.
- Helping your child understand sociability, personal space and group play.
- Tips and tricks on how to build independence through helping out with chores around the home.
- Building the skills to help your child start to move around your community to give them the confidence to step out into the world.
- Teaching advocacy and rights early by educating your child how to talk about vision loss and asking for help when they need it.
- Help to gear families up for success with advice on how to build a team of support around your family and your child.
- Advice, care and support to get your child ready to move into high school.

Kaylah, Vision Australia client.



# 3

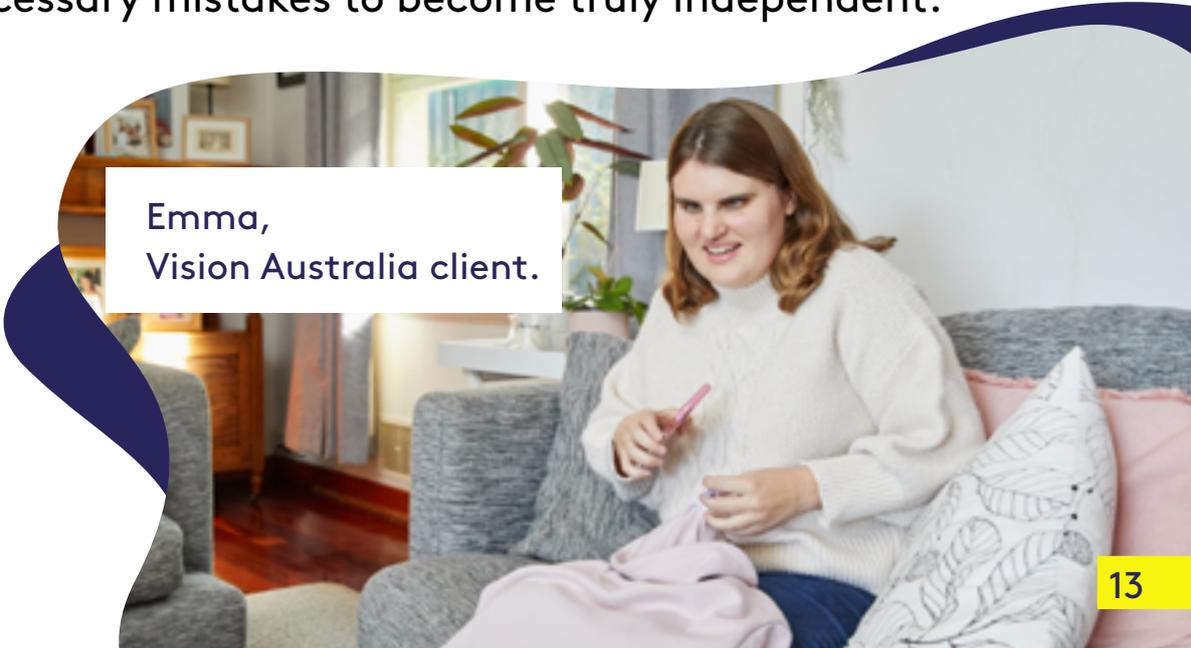
## High school and beyond

### Discover the future

Cementing belief in their future and the skills to take hold of opportunities and choices in front of them

#### Core Content:

- Cementing belief in their future and the skills to take hold of opportunities and choices in front of them.
- Building confidence and skills to work with others and foster trust outside of the family's support system.
- Strengthening personal confidence and belief that one can be and is independent.
- Developing skills and confidence to get themselves to school, a part time job and beyond.
- Ensuring they know enough about the world to make skilled and informed choices independently.
- Volunteering and work experience to practice skills in the community they want to join.
- Supporting parents to let go, so your child can try things and make the necessary mistakes to become truly independent.



Emma,  
Vision Australia client.

# How we approach working together

We know the experience of being part of this program can be just as important as the information itself, which is why we work hard to make sure we are:

## Family Centred

Being family centred means we explore each family's individual needs, challenges, goals and routines. We consider everything from your culture and background, your hopes and desires to what resources you have access to. We then work with you to develop a tailored plan of support and services that will meet the specific needs of your child and family.

## Coaching

We work with families to understand your unique goals and coach you to identify ways you can achieve these. Coaching enables families to work towards their goals every day, building on the work provided during service appointments.

## Here and now, and the future

We focus not only on the here and now through skills development at specific ages and stages of childhood but consider the future and how skills developed now will support future goals, whatever they may be.

## The tools to build their belief in choice

We use the nine Life Skill areas (ECC) to help your child or young person to develop the skills they'll need to build their belief in choice and ensure they have the foundations they need for their learning and future independence.

# Our team of experts will be your guide

We pride ourselves on putting your family and your child's individual needs at the heart of this program; using our expertise to guide you on what support you can access to help your child reach their full potential.

The way we work always takes into consideration the broader support network a family might be using, taking care to engage and work with other services and schools to ensure together we build a safe, supportive space in which a child can flourish.

## Connecting you to a network of support



Hailey, Vision Australia client.

# Meet your Life Ready team of experts

The Life Ready program gives your family access to a team of pediatric experts trained specifically for helping children and young people who are blind or have low vision.

You can engage with our experts with confidence as Vision Australia is a registered NDIS provider. This means we meet strict government quality and safety requirements and offer specialised services.

Vision Australia will work with you to identify and engage the best expertise to help your child and family meet their goals and make the everyday that little bit better.



Go to Appendix one of this brochure for a full list of our service providers and the type of service they provide.

# Services can be delivered in many different ways

We know everyone is different, and people like to connect and learn in different ways. Which is why the Life Ready Program uses a combination of face-to-face, phone and online services and resources to suit both the program stage and your family's needs.

## Individual sessions

Regular one-on-one consultation to privately guide and develop goals based on your families unique needs and circumstances.

## Group sessions

Group programs are available for you and your child to provide a valuable opportunity for peer connections and social interaction whilst focusing on areas such as communication, physical development, literacy, orientation and mobility and school readiness.

## Parent sessions and resources: groups and the online parent community

An informal opportunity to meet other families, socialise, share ideas and connect.

## Life Ready Hub

A collection of learning and development resources that children and young people and their parents and carers can access to inspire learning no matter a child's stage of development.

# Vision Australia's extended support network

There are so many other wonderful services that you can enjoy through Vision Australia.

## Vision Australia Library

Explore a world of stories and information with the [Vision Australia library](#). With over 35,000 titles available, there is sure to be something for everyone.

Membership to the library is free, and as a member you can access audio books, newspapers, magazines and more via the free Vision Australia Connect app on your smart phone or tablet. Books can be downloaded or streamed through the app and are available in various formats.

## Feelix Collection

Our [Feelix Collection](#) is a specialised children's library for children aged 0 to 7. It is a wonderful resource to help foster a love of reading and build literacy skills. Families can enjoy the magic of stories together, with our special braille and tactile storybook kits.

## Get what you need in an accessible format

You can request up to 360 print pages to be converted to your child's preferred format for free each year. We can convert to braille, audio, large print, tactile graphics or electronic text.

Our tactile production extends to labels, maps, artwork, stickers, books, jigsaw puzzles, rulers, playing cards, games and more. The latest technology and products

## The latest technology and products

The features a great range of products and technologies for every day. From electronic magnifiers, accessible games, braille machines to talking clocks, there's something for every child.

## Vision Australia Radio

Get your Happy Pants on with [Vision Australia Radio's](#) children's program and podcast!

This half-hour show promises to entertain and inspire children under 10, specifically those who are blind, have low vision or have any type of print disability.

Each week will include immersive stories, dance breaks, music, a chance to learn about animals and more!

Listen to Happy Pants live from 10am Saturdays on your local Vision Australia Radio service or online plus listen to the Happy Pants podcast wherever you like to listen to podcasts.



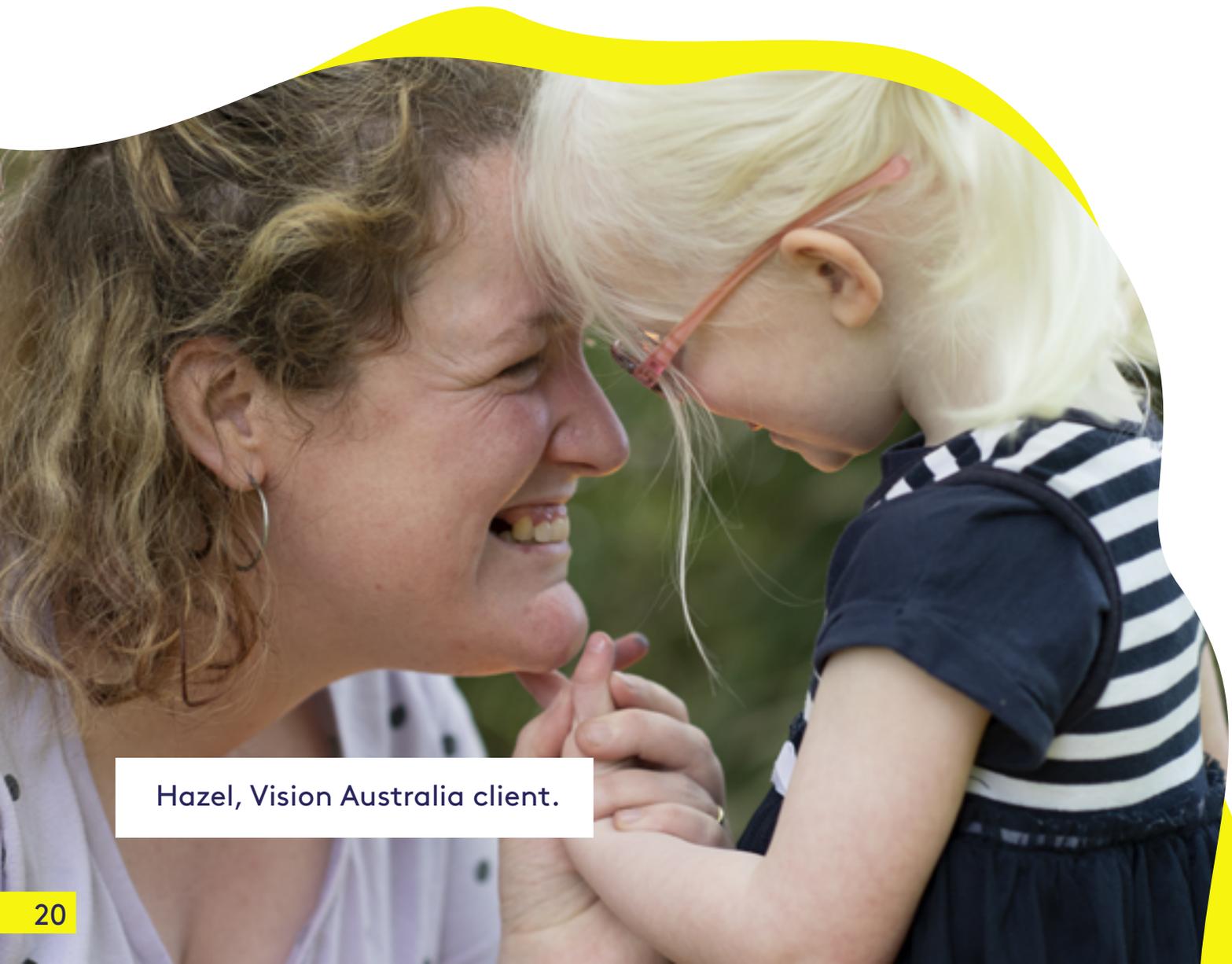
Alfie, Vision Australia client

## How will you pay for it - Navigating funding

All three stages of the Life Ready program can be covered by The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) funding. The NDIS enables you to tailor support and services for your child's individual needs and goals.

From an initial funding request to making sure you are prepared for your NDIS planning meeting, we can assist you at every stage of your NDIS funding application.

If you can't access funding, or perhaps you want to be part of an additional activity that your NDIS package does not cover, you can chat to one of our team about other options. This could be as simple as paying a fee for the service or discovering one of our complimentary services.



Hazel, Vision Australia client.

## FAQ

**Q. How would you describe the Life Ready program in three words?**

**A. Belong** – I have a group of people that don't judge me where I can be myself.

**Freedom** – I now believe I can choose the future I want, rather than being told what I can do.

**Rights** – I now know I can stand up for myself and what I want. I feel more confident saying yes or no"

- Haya, age 11



## About our brochure creator



"My name is Alise, I am the graphic designer at Vision Australia and creator of this brochure. I am a person who has low vision. As a person who has low vision and working in a field where there is still stigma around having low vision and designing, I received so many knock backs until an opportunity arose with Vision Australia's career graduate program. I am very grateful and love working in a supportive environment. It may seem hard and all you want to do is give up, but keep persevering – you never know what opportunities lie around the corner!"

**Alise Mustafa**

# Appendix one

The Life Ready program gives your family access to a team of paediatric experts trained specifically for helping children and young people who are blind or have low vision.

<b>Family support practitioner</b>	Supports new families to access funding and works with you to tailor the supports to start early intervention.
<b>Orthoptists</b>	Conduct vision assessments and help you understand your child's vision. They can also do lighting assessments and recommend low vision magnification aids to assist with everyday activities.
<b>Speech pathologists</b>	For children who are blind or have low vision, speech pathologists cover a range of areas, including non-verbal communication skills, literacy and feeding, as well as speech sound development and the development of language.
<b>Physiotherapists</b>	Help your child develop confidence to move with coordination and balance, build their strength, posture and agility.
<b>Psychologists &amp; counsellors</b>	They work with you and your child to develop strategies and confidence to help talk about your child's vision condition in every day environments and assist with emotional support.
<b>Orientation and mobility experts</b>	Work with you and your child to develop skills that allow them to independently and safely navigate in the home, school and community. They conduct environmental assessments in the preschool, school and community to identify equipment/technology skills training that will enable your child to travel independently in these environments.
<b>Technology access specialists</b>	They assess your child's skills and need and help train them to use technology like screen readers, magnifiers, and voice to text.
<b>Occupational therapists</b>	Help your child participate in the everyday such as self-care, social activities, and foster independence.
<b>Early childhood specialists</b>	Educators who work with families and others through development of planning and organisation, tactile and hand skills. They will work with you to encourage early literacy, transitions to early childhood education settings, such as childcare and preschool, as well as the big step to formal education.  <b>*Available only in Victoria</b>



Ollie, Vision Australia client

## Contact us

Find out more about how our services and support can help your family today.

Call us on 1300 84 74 66

Vision Australia has metro and regional centres around Australia. Call us or visit our website at [visionaustralia.org](http://visionaustralia.org) to find the one closest to you.

### Find out more



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**Vision  
Australia**

Blindness. Low Vision. Opportunity.