Neurological Vision Impairment (NVI)

Neurological Vision Impairment is the term used to describe a vision impairment caused by damage to the brain, such as a stroke (cerebro-vascular accident - CVA), tumour, brain injury or pathological degenerative disease.

Vision impairment is generally thought of as damage to or deterioration of the eyes. There are many different areas of the brain that interpret what our eyes see. When these are damaged, the eyes may still function but the message might be misinterpreted or unable to get through to the brain resulting in NVI.

People with brain injuries may not always be aware that their vision is impaired.

The most common example of NVI is a visual field deficit often referred to as a Homonymous Hemianopia. Often people who have this condition will believe that they are blind in one eye. This is not so. There is usually an impairment to either the left or right visual fields of each eye.

Unfortunately neither glasses nor eye surgery will restore sight for a person with a NVI.

Some functional implications of Homonymous Hemianopia are:

- seeing only half of an image or person’s face
- bumping into objects on the side of the impaired field of vision
- missing half the food on a plate
- walking past doorways or landmarks and becoming disoriented as a result
- being startled by people and objects suddenly appearing from the deficit field of vision
- completely missing or misreading street signs
- feeling uncertain and anxious when travelling in crowded areas
- experiencing difficulty in reading due to ineffective scanning across a page of print

The person with NVI may alleviate these difficulties by being taught compensatory scanning techniques.
How we can help

People who have Neurological Vision Impairment can receive assistance from Guide Dogs NSW/ACT.

Orientation and Mobility services are designed to meet individual needs and are provided on a one-to-one basis. Our Instructors will assist the person with a vision impairment to become confident travelling safely and efficiently in familiar and unfamiliar environments.

Our Low Vision Clinic is a joint venture with the University of New South Wales School of Optometry and assessments are billed through Medicare. The clinic is located at Guide Dogs office in Chatswood, Sydney.

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT provides all of its services, including mobility aids, free of charge.

To refer someone to us, with their permission, please phone your nearest Client Services office on:

Sydney East Region: (02) 9412 9300 Lismore: (02) 6621 8475
Sydney West Region: (02) 9891 4914 Newcastle: (02) 4925 3066
Low Vision Clinic: (02) 9412 9392 Orange: (02) 6362 6625
Guide Dogs Centre: (02) 4579 7555 Tamworth: (02) 6761 3152
ACT: (02) 6285 2988 Wagga Wagga: (02) 6925 3559
Albury: (02) 6041 5201 Wollongong: (02) 4225 9247
Coffs Harbour: (02) 6652 7424

Or contact us at www.guidedogs.com.au/contact