# Understanding Individual Advocacy

## What does advocacy involve?

As one of Australia’s most trusted service providers for people with low vision or blindness, Guide Dogs is proud to have a prominent voice for equal access in the community.

Our advocacy efforts are designed to remove barriers for people with low vision or blindness. The goal is to ensure everyone can enjoy the same experience of using public transport, visiting public places and spaces, accessing health and education environments, achieve meaningful employment, and more.

By partnering with different government departments, peak bodies, and even other service providers, we can identify issues, inform policies and legislation, and generally promote an inclusive culture that is more aware and considerate of people with low vision or blindness.

Advocacy is just one more of the many ways we provide support, to ensure people with low vision or blindness can experience the world with freedom and independence.

## Individual level advocacy

Individual advocacy occurs if you’re a person with low vision or blindness and you experience a specific incident of discrimination, misunderstanding, or a barrier to the use of a service or space.

For example, if a restaurant stops you from bringing your Guide Dog inside, or a taxi or ride-share vehicle refuses to carry you and your Guide Dog. In these cases, you can contact the service provider directly, reach out to Guide Dogs or we can connect you with advocacy organisations such as [Blind Citizens Australia](https://www.bca.org.au/) who have expertise in individual advocacy and can assist you to achieve a resolution.

## How can I access support for individual advocacy?

Connect with your local Guide Dogs for advice and guidance on your specific concern or experience.

At Guide Dogs, we generally focus our expertise on broader systemic advocacy and Access Consultation and Industry Training including accessible and inclusive design, because it provides the best outcome for the most people possible.

By partnering with different organisations to design public systems, services, and spaces to better support people with low vision or blindness—and promote education around issues of low vision or blindness—we hope there will be less cause for individual advocacy moving forward.

Access Consultation and Industry Training is a key part of our approach. By raising awareness, we hope to equip you, and others, with the tools and understanding to confidently answer questions like:

* What are my access rights in specific situations?
* What is the legal standing or precedent for certain situations?
* What are my rights in any given space or context?

However, while we focus on systemic advocacy, we’re always here to provide assistance and support if you experience a refusal of service or entry with your Guide Dog, or you encounter a negative experience due to low vision or blindness.

We strive to provide online resources you can use in your own advocacy efforts while outlining our ongoing systemic work to achieve a more inclusive and accessible community.

Please [contact your local Guide Dogs](https://guidedogs.com.au/get-support/find-us-in-your-area/) organisation for advice and guidance on your specific concern or experience.

## About our advocacy partners

Guide Dogs is proud to work closely with a wide range of State and Federal Government departments while partnering with organisations including:

[Blind Citizens Australia](https://www.bca.org.au/)

[Vision 2020](https://www.vision2020australia.org.au/)

[People With Disability Australia](https://pwd.org.au/)