

# Guide Dogs.

for-purpose  
evaluations

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## 2023 Impact Report

In partnership with For-Purpose Evaluations



## How we create change

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**Guide Dogs Australia exists to support people with low vision or blindness to live the life they choose.**

**Over the past two years we have developed a national social impact measurement framework. We want to know when and how we are making a difference, and where we can do better.**

This is our first social impact report after piloting the social impact measurement framework. It is important to us to share what we have learned about the impact of our work with our Clients, volunteers, supports and partners. This report sets out the highlights of what we have achieved. We are committed to learning and improving, so this report also shows the areas where we can increase our impact. We look forward to continuing to measure our social impact, and working with our Clients, volunteers, supporters and partners so that people with low vision or blindness can live the life they choose.

## How we measure our impact

We have focused on understanding the outcomes of our work with Clients aged 15 years and older for our first social impact report.

We have created several bespoke data collection tools which we have used alongside Clients between March and May 2023 in the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Queensland, the Northern Territory, South Australia and Victoria. These tools gather information about what has changed for Clients since working with Guide Dogs, based on our Theory of Change.

## How we create change

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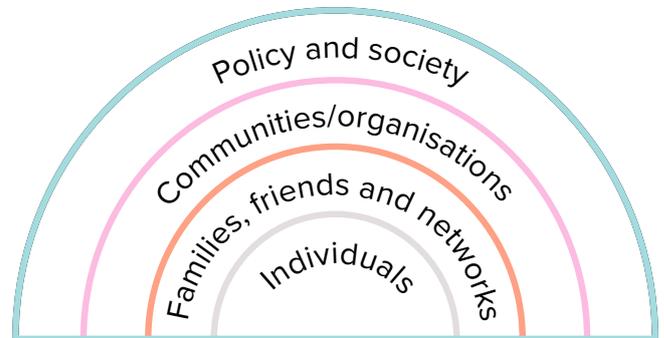
**Our Theory of Change outlines how we contribute to change within a complex system. Our ultimate goal is that people with low vision or blindness can live the life they choose.**

We recognise there are physical, attitudinal, social and systemic barriers that must change to enable people with disability, including low vision or blindness, to live the life they want on an equal basis with others.

We all have a role to play in creating a more inclusive society and we will all benefit. Figure 1 shows some of the changes we create, support and advocate for at different levels in the social system.

**Figure 1**

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### Policy and society

- Increased early detection and prevention of low vision or blindness
- Increase in and simplification of disability support funding

### Communities/organisations

- Inclusive workplaces
- Positive social attitudes
- Accessible environments
- Inclusive community organisations

### Families, friends and networks

- Support for caregivers
- Supporting individuals' choice in their own lives

### Individuals

- See Figure 2

## How we create change

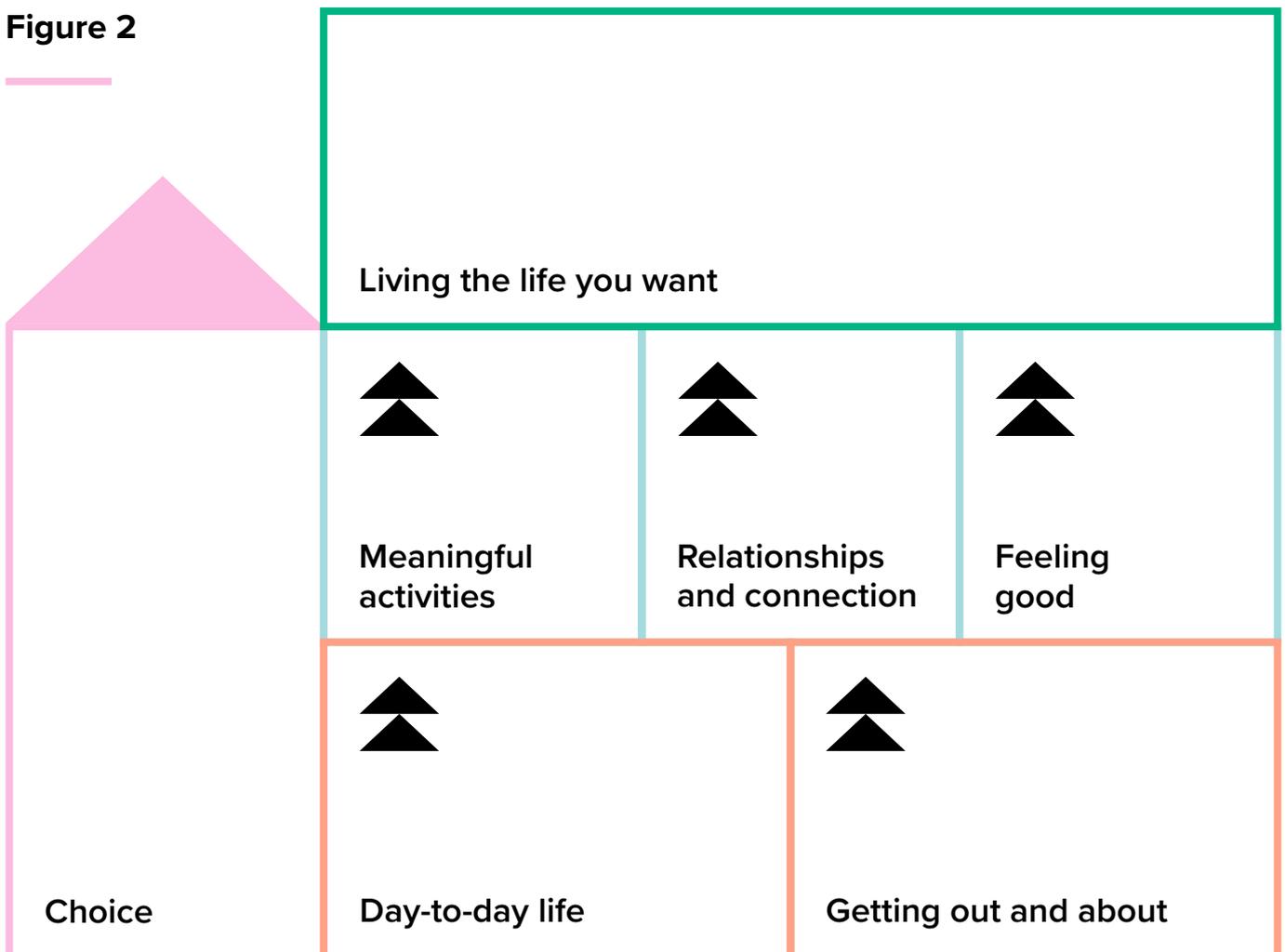
Most of our work is with individuals and their families or caregivers. When social, physical and digital environments are not accessible or inclusive, people with low vision or blindness can face barriers to living the life they want.

Through our Guide Dogs and our client and vision services, we work with our Clients to increase their skills, confidence and their access to support and accessibility tools.

We enable more choice for how people go about their day-to-day lives and get out and about. We support people to pursue meaningful activities that are important to them, and to build and maintain strong relationships and connections. We help people to feel more positive about the future.

Figure 2 shows how these changes build on each other to enable people with low vision or blindness to live the life they want. We expect to have the biggest impact in our Clients' day-to-day life and how they get out and about, and contribute to change in the other areas.

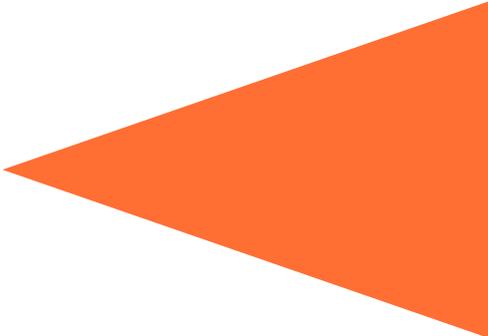
Figure 2



## How we create change

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## In 2023 we supported:



**5,668**

Clients across Australia

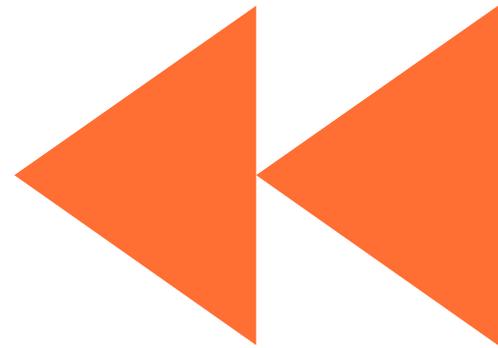


**674**

people with working Guide Dogs in the community

# “Guide Dogs has given me freedom.”

Guide Dogs Client.

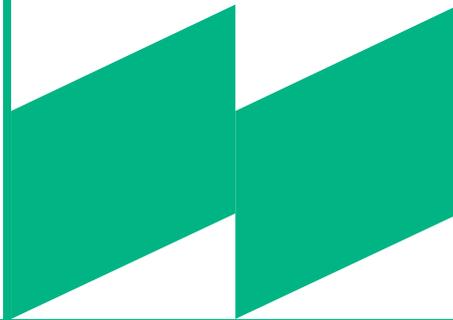


## Living the life you want

Living the life you want is about having the freedom and flexibility to be the person you want to be and pursue the things that are important to you. Each person has the right to make their own decisions, big and small, about their life.

**71%**

of Clients say they are more able to live the life they want.



“I never would have dreamt that I would move out of home.”

“I have more independence to do what I want to do when I want to do it.”



**73%**

of Clients say they have more choice in how they go about each day.

“With Guide Dogs I can live the life I want.”

## Jade's story

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Jade has been accessing services from Guide Dogs for about 17 years, including Orientation and Mobility, Occupational Therapy and Guide Dog Mobility Services.

Jade is able to get out and about using the skills she has learned with Guide Dogs. This includes using a long cane, GPS applications and accessing public transport information.

Jade now has a Guide Dog called Kira. With her increasing confidence, skills, and tools, Jade is able to do more of the activities that are important to her. She enjoys meeting up with friends, going to live music and her job which she finds fulfilling.

“For me, because I’m a bit of a social butterfly, I love to go out with my friends. Being able to go out and actually see my friends rather than them having to come here or pick me up before we go out...I just find that it eases any kind of tension on relationships.”

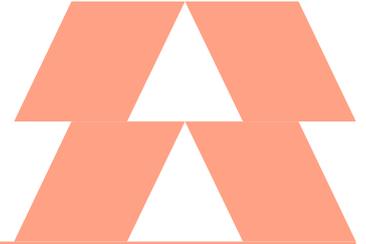
“I’m actually very passionate about what I do so being able to get to and from work independently is so important to fulfilling my purpose in my life.”

“I have the confidence to be able to go and see live music... [this is] one thing I love to do.”



## Day-to-day life

We work with our Clients to increase their skills, confidence and their access to support and accessibility tools.



“I am more able to confidently use technology—and even help others, at times.”

“I feel safer and more efficient at home because of Guide Dogs’ support.”



**78%**

of Clients say they are more confident doing daily activities.

**77%**

of Clients say they are more independent when doing daily activities around the home or online.

**76%**

of Clients say they feel safer in their home, in relation to their vision condition.



## Day-to-day life

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### Highlight

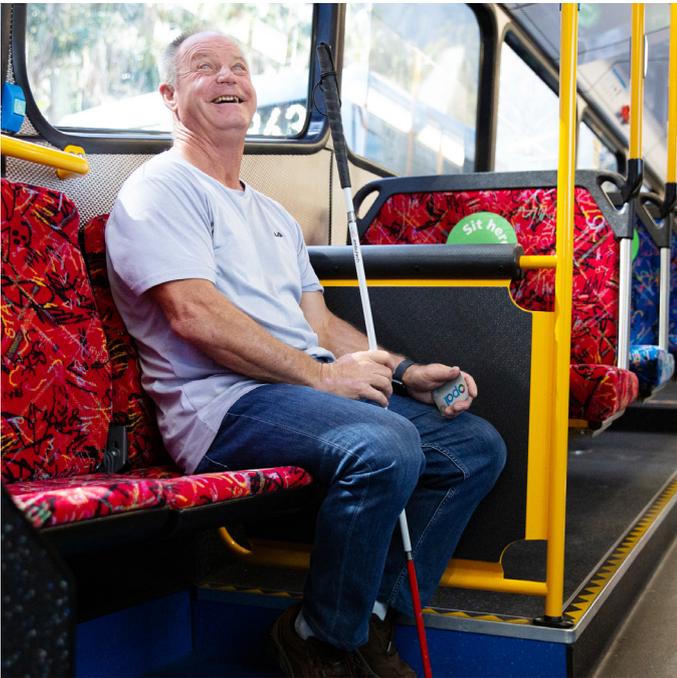
Day-to-day life is one of the areas where we had the most impact for people who access our Client and Vision Services.

81% of people who accessed Client and Vision Services say they do daily activities with more independence when they would like to.



## Getting out and about

With increased confidence, skills, and access to support and accessibility tools, our Clients are better able to move around in the community and get where they want to go.



“Guide Dogs gave me back my life. It made me realise I can leave the house and I feel safe with the cane. The cane opened up my life.”

**79%**

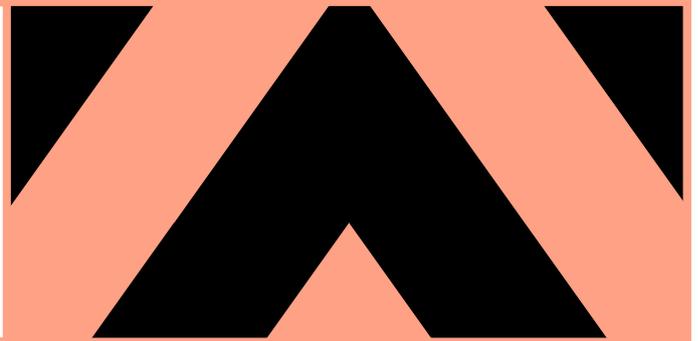
of Clients say they are more independent when getting out and about.

“[It] has been totally instrumental in helping me to deal with my vision loss and get me out in the community and be confident.”

“I can safely walk to and from school alone.”

**80%**

of Clients say they are more confident getting out and about.



## Getting out and about

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### Highlight

For many of our Clients, having a Guide Dog has had a big impact on how they get out and about.

**91% of people with a Guide Dog said they have the skills and knowledge they need to get out and about with more independence.**

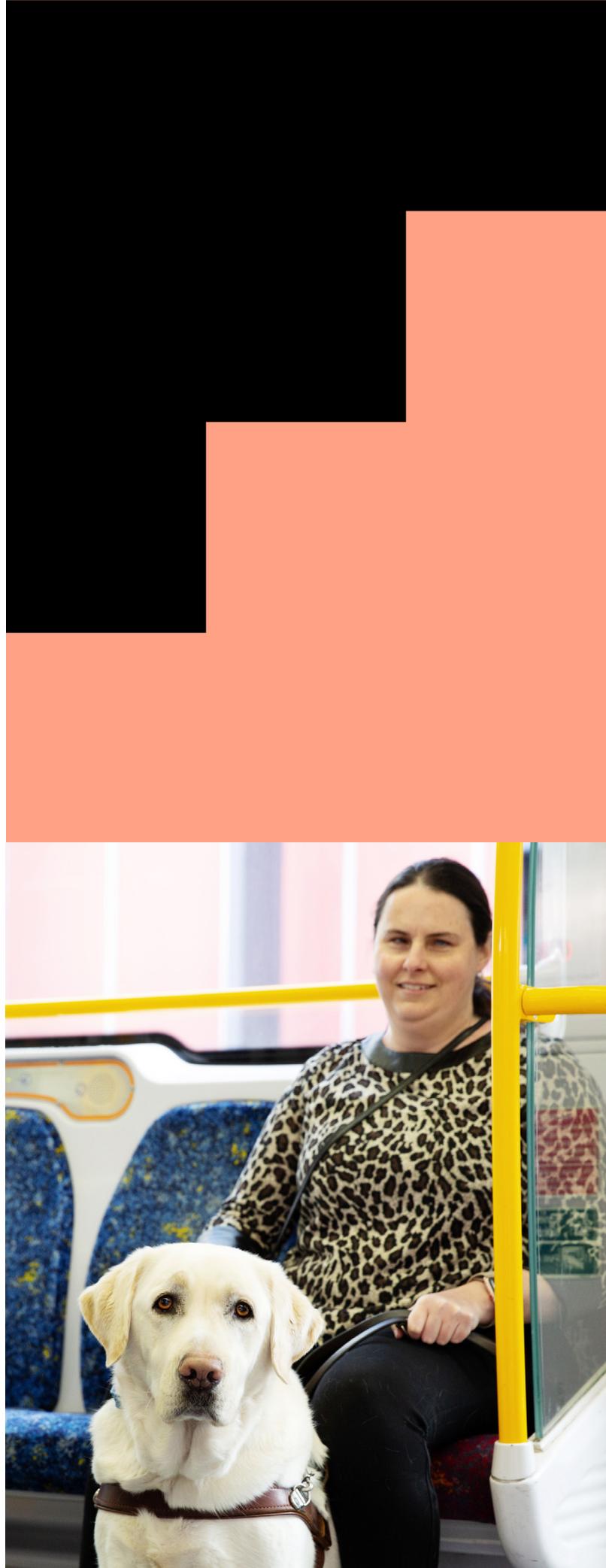
**88% said they are more independent when getting out and about.**

“Guide Dogs has increased my independence with having my Guide Dog and self-confidence to get around. We fly every three months and I can catch the bus into town.”

### Learning point

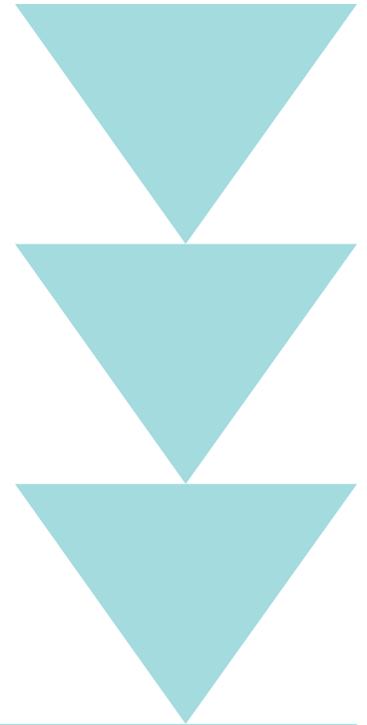
While 80% of Clients are more confident getting out and about, only 70% feel safer doing so. We will continue to advocate for our Clients’ safety in the community, for example around silent vehicles, community attitudes, and accessible public spaces.

We will also look at how we can improve our services to support people in feeling safe getting out and about.



## Meaningful activities

Each person has different activities that are important to them. This may include work, leisure, education, caring, volunteering, hobbies and creative activities. Our Clients have more choice in how they go about day-to-day life and get out and about, and increased skills, confidence, access to support and accessibility tools. Because of this, they are better able to participate in the activities that are meaningful to them.



**81%**

of Clients say they are more confident doing activities that are important to them.

“While I was working I used the cane and my miniscope and magnifier.”

“Due to having Guide Dogs for 25+ years I have been able to extend my studies, work full time and increase my opportunities to participate in community activities.”

“The low vision devices have helped me keep my reading hobby.”



**65%**

of Clients say they do more of the things that are important to them.

## Meaningful activities

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### Learning point

There is an opportunity to increase our impact in this area, to support our Clients to do the activities that are important to them.

For some people, this may not be the primary focus of their Guide Dogs services. For others, there may be barriers to participating. For example, we know people with Guide Dogs are sometimes discriminated against by local venues which may illegally refuse access to their Guide Dog.

We will work to understand more about how we can support our Clients to engage in the activities that are important to them.



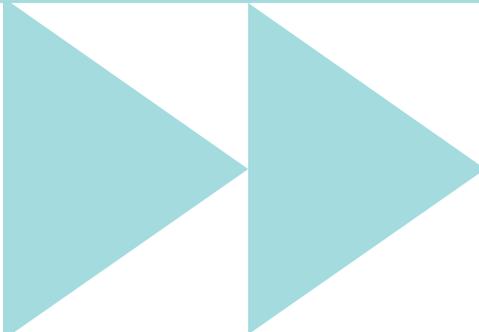
## Relationships and connection

With opportunities for increased independence, to get out and about and engage in personally meaningful activities, our Clients maintain and strengthen their familial, social, community and professional networks.



“Guide Dogs have given me back my confidence, given me back my social skills.”

“I am able to get out and about using my long cane and can do so on my own. I don’t always have to have someone with me which can get a bit wearing. It is nice to have my own time.”



“My Guide Dog starts conversations, rather than people not seeing me.”

**71%**  
of Clients say they have made or maintained their social connections.

**68%**  
of Clients say they spend more quality time with the people they care about.



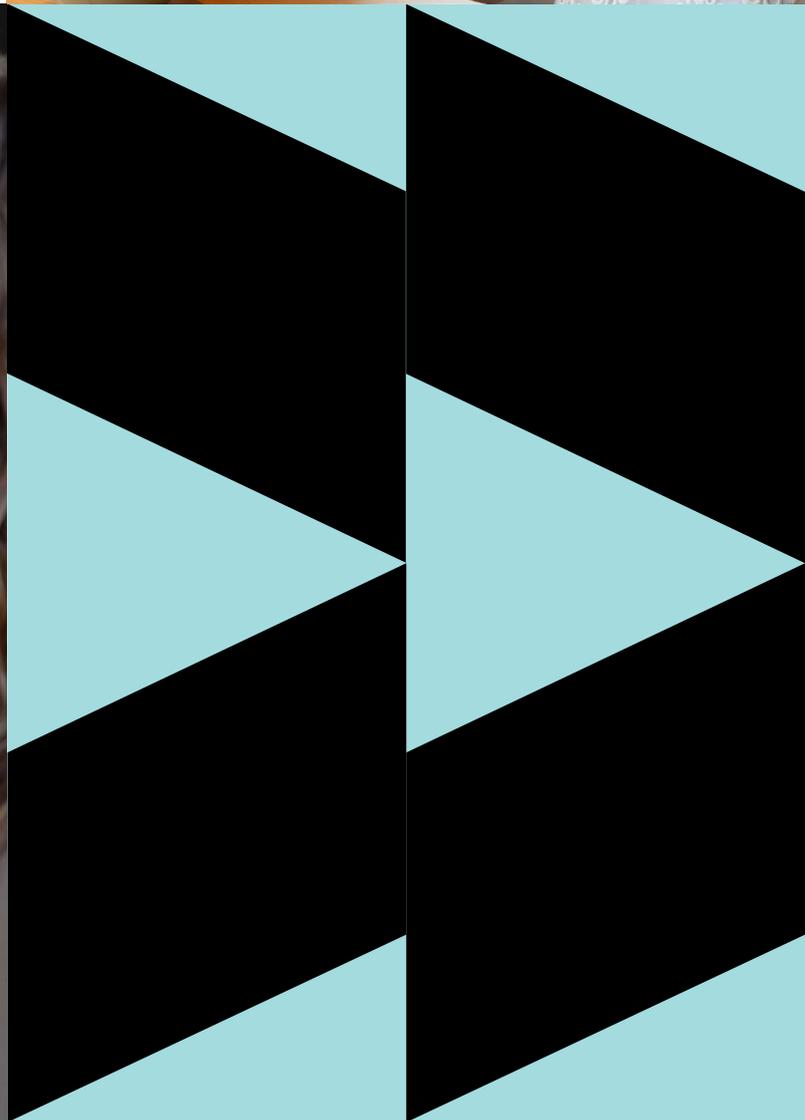
## Relationships and connection

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### Learning point

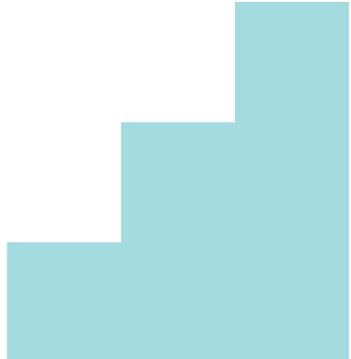
While the majority of Clients have seen a positive change in their relationships and connection, this is also an area where we could increase our impact.

We are looking forward to using this insight to inform our future work to support our Clients to meet people, maintain their social connections, and spend quality time with the people they care about.



## Feeling good

We contribute to our Clients feeling good, with a sense of achievement, pride and hope for the future.

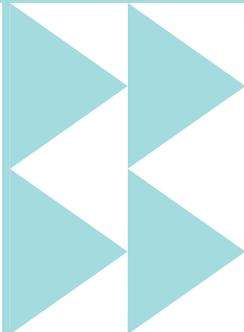


“Guide Dogs supported me through losing my vision...I know there can be a new normal being vision impaired.”

“I have a sense of achievement from being able to access these places on my own.”

**75%**

of Clients say they recognise more of their strengths.



**73%**

of Clients say they feel more positive about the future.

**77%**

of Clients say they feel more confident in themselves and what they can do.



“I am starting to feel a bit optimistic about what is available for the future.”

“I now find things that used to be challenging not so overwhelming.”



## Vicki's story

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Vicki recently moved to a retirement village with her husband. She worked with Guide Dogs' Orientation and Mobility Services to learn how to get around the village.

Vicki can now get out and about: to the café, the shop, the hairdresser, the bar and the gym. She can meet up with friends and participate in local activities. Now that she's able to get around, Vicki says the "world has opened up enormously" and "life looks so much brighter".

"I love to be able to get into what's happening...the activities and things that you can be involved in here. I love being able to confidently say "yes, I'll be there".

When her husband recently spent some time in hospital, Vicki was able to find her way to pick up prescriptions and some groceries.

"I have confidence that if my husband ever went to hospital again, I know I'd be absolutely fine on my own. Being able to live on my own successfully was an absolute achievement."



## What's next?

This is our first social impact report with our new social impact measurement framework. We have piloted the framework this year and will continue to embed it across our organisations.

This will equip us with more information to understand our impact more deeply and how it changes over time. We look forward to continuing to share our learnings with our Clients, volunteers, supporters and partners.



**We're here whenever you need us.**

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# Guide Dogs.

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