

# Guide Dogs.

## Environmental, Social and Governance Statement.





**For more than 65 years, Guide Dogs NSW/ACT has supported people with low vision or blindness to help break the boundaries that limit them. Our Clients are at the heart of everything that we do, and our current Strategy is focused on leading the charge towards an accessible and inclusive world for people with low vision or blindness by 2030. Fundamental to our work is the understanding that all Australians contribute to the richness of our communities.**

We understand the critical role of charities in operating within the bounds of legality, ethics, and responsibility. Our commitment to fostering and deepening our understanding of Environment, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles is driven by our overarching vision and strategic goals. Our contribution to creating a more equitable and sustainable future is firmly rooted in our core values of lead with head and heart; never stop exploring; walk the talk; and lift each other.

We recognise the need to address and progress each aspect of ESG, considering the inherent urgency while ensuring that our actions are deliberate, proportionate, and adhere to the highest standards of best practice. We have adopted a balanced approach to acting on and advancing each element of ESG, factoring in the underlying urgency, and ensuring that the steps we decide to take are considered, measured, and follow best practice.



# Environmental sustainability.

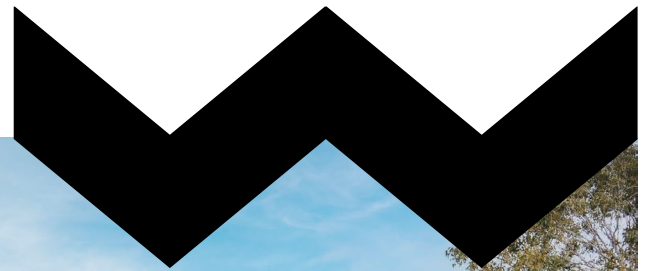
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We recognise the impact our business operations have on the environment and are committed to reducing our negative impact on the environment and contributing to mitigating the effects of global warming. We are at the early stages of examining our carbon footprint and building on our existing organisational strategies and actions to further reduce our environmental impact.

The fit out and use of our flagship building at St Leonards embeds sustainable features and the design was carefully considered to minimise impact to the environment and the local neighbourhood. We continue to apply the lessons learnt to all new properties where practicable.

The Guide Dogs Centre at Glossodia, where all our dogs spend time in training, uses a specialised grey water management and recycling system. This year we have installed solar power and battery storage and replaced a diesel back-up generator to further reduce our carbon footprint.

We will continue to embed sustainable practices at all our properties where practicable.



# Social responsibility.

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People with low vision or blindness face many barriers to community inclusion. Our aim is to uphold and promote the rights of people with low vision or blindness through progressive and focused advocacy, together with community education. As a disability provider, whose core work is to support our Clients to live the life they choose, we are focused on advocacy as part of our 2030 Strategy. Currently, we are actively advocating in several areas at a state government level, and we are well positioned to continue to advance the 'social' element of ESG over the coming year.

At the heart of our commitment to social responsibility, we are fostering a culture that respects human rights. Guide Dogs NSW/ACT is working to ensure the dignity and rights of our employees, volunteers, Clients, and all those we engage with are respected and protected.

Our social responsibility extends to the dogs both in our care, and who have completed service as a Guide Dog. Acknowledging the rising costs of living, on 1 July we launched a Financial Assistance Package to provide support with the ongoing cost of care for retired Guide Dogs. **Applications can be found on our website.**

Earlier this year, our Advocacy efforts were successful in restoring screen reader capability to the popular 'Hazards Near Me' application which provides critical alerts for hazards such as fires and floods. An upgrade in October 2023 rendered the application inaccessible, causing concern for many

who relied on this application for hazard information. As a result of our advocacy campaign, not only was the application restored to full accessibility, but Guide Dogs NSW/ACT also received a response from the Minister committing to inclusive design for the app, and an accessibility roundtable with NSW Rural Fire Service, the NSW Office for Accessibility and the NSW Department of Customer Service will be organised to workshop future solutions.

Read more about our **advocacy efforts.**

## Reconciliation Action Plan.

Recognising, and respecting Indigenous Australians is important to us, and this year Guide Dogs NSW/ACT was proud to launch a Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

A RAP is a strategic document that provides a framework for developing and maintaining relationships with, and creating opportunities for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Our RAP outlines practical actions and initiatives that we will undertake to promote reconciliation and support Indigenous communities.

Launching the Guide Dogs NSW/ACT Reflect RAP marks a significant milestone in fostering workplace diversity and inclusion. It plays a crucial role in acknowledging and honouring Indigenous cultures, promoting cultural understanding, increasing employment opportunities, supporting Indigenous businesses, and encouraging reconciliation in society.

Read our **Reflect RAP.**



## Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT has set a target to have 15 percent of its workforce identify as having a disability by 2027.

This quota is part of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) 2024-2027, released in December 2023.

The DIAP has been strongly shaped by an independent audit undertaken by the Australian Network on Disability and research into best practice. Guide Dogs NSW/ACT staff and customers were also heavily involved in its creation.

The DIAP identifies three priorities:

- **People:** Be recognised as an employer of choice for people with disability through accessible and inclusive workplace and practices.
- **Practices:** Be recognised as a leader of accessibility and inclusion in our places and practices.
- **Leadership:** Be recognised by our community, government and industry as a leader in accessibility and inclusion.

Our DIAP builds on our commitment to these priorities.

We aim to actively encourage, value and welcome staff with a disability; ensure our built, digital and communication environments are accessible; and embrace inclusion innovation for our staff, Clients and stakeholders.

Read our [DIAP](#).





## Digital accessibility.

Accessible materials are not a choice, but an obligation. Australian legislation requires that people with disabilities have equal access to information and services. All employees need accessible information to perform their roles, including those who use screen readers.

Digital accessibility is the process of making digital products accessible to all audiences, including people who are blind or have low vision. Poor digital accessibility will restrict people from accessing content, such as websites, mobile apps, documents, and social media posts.

We are committed to improving equity, access, and inclusion for all stakeholders across the organisation.

We strive for continual improvement in our processes and practices to enable an equitable and inclusive world for everyone and demonstrate best practices in accessibility in all we do. We are continuing to assess and update our approach, policies, and practices to align with this commitment and are actively adopting practices that contribute to the prohibition, prevention, and elimination of all forms of discrimination.

Accessibility training is mandatory for all staff at Guide Dogs NSW/ACT. We provide self-paced online digital accessibility training which ensures documents and emails are accessible for everyone and supports people who are blind or have low vision.

Learn more about the [training we offer](#).

# Governance.

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Robust governance lays the groundwork for effectively addressing environmental, social, and other significant concerns. We ensure accountability and ethical conduct is front of mind, and good governance is integrated into the fabric of our organisational culture and actions and supported through comprehensive procedures. Our people are committed to upholding the utmost standards of integrity, both personally and professionally, in all our service and business dealings. Our **Corporate Governance Statement** is reviewed annually and is available on our website.

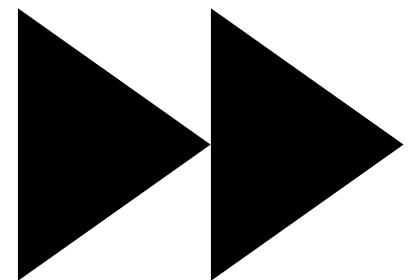
The Corporate Governance Statement explores all areas of governance across Guide Dogs NSW/ACT and is approved by the Board.

We are focused on cyber security and privacy and our staff receive regular training and updates.

We are committed to socially responsible investment and will not knowingly invest in an organisation that conducts business without due regard for the impact on the environment, human rights, public safety, dignity of employees and effect of their business operations on communities within which they operate.

This year we are also taking steps to ensure that our supply chain is transparent, fair, and as sustainable as far as possible.

We will continue to examine our impact and influence on ESG issues; remain flexible and adjust our approach including working collaboratively with sector peers and suppliers to advance positive change and reduce our carbon footprint.



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

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