Institute for Public Policy and Governance

Guide Dogs.

Pathways to Inclusion.

Stakeholder Insights Report.

Prepared by Institute for Public Policy and Governance,
University of Technology Sydney
For Guide Dogs NSW & ACT

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Acknowledgements.

The University of Technology Sydney (UTS) acknowledges the Eora Nation and the Dharug Nation, upon whose ancestral lands our university stands. We would also like to pay respect to the Elders both past and present, acknowledging them as the traditional custodians of knowledge for these lands.

About the Institute for Public Policy and Governance.

The Institute for Public Policy and Governance (IPPG) is an independent centre within UTS focused on driving excellence in public policy and creating public good through its advisory services, research, evaluation, professional learning and capacity building solutions for all tiers of government, the not-for-profit sector and industry.

As part of a university committed to conducting impact-driven research, IPPG works to deliver practical, measurable solutions based on a robust evidence base.

Institute for Public Policy and Governance
University of Technology Sydney

PO Box 123 Broadway, NSW, 2007
Telephone: (02) 9514 7884
E ippg@uts.edu.au
W uts.edu.au/research/centres/institute-public-policy-and-governance

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Executive summary.

This report presents findings from the 2025 *Pathways to Inclusion* research project, commissioned by Guide Dogs NSW/ACT and undertaken by the University of Technology Sydney's Institute for Public Policy and Governance (IPPG). The project provides a contemporary evidence base to inform the update of the 2015 *Pathways to Inclusion* resource, supporting local governments in NSW and the ACT to create safer, more inclusive communities for people who are blind or have low vision.

The study combined a **desktop review**, **stakeholder workshops**, and a **targeted survey** of 308 unique respondents, including people with lived experience, advocacy groups, and local government representatives. Analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data reveals consistent patterns across multiple dimensions of community accessibility - from infrastructure and design to communication and governance.

This Stakeholder Insights Report focuses on the results from the survey conducted under this project, primarily with people who are bind or have low vision.

Key insights.

- **Accessibility is built on predictability and intuition.** Participants consistently reported that confidence and independence are greatest in environments where tactile, auditory, and visual cues are consistent and where design features are intuitive to navigate. Intuitive environments enable people to move safely without needing to interpret complex or inconsistent layouts. In contrast, irregular surfaces, poor lighting, and cluttered footpaths continue to present significant barriers to safe and confident mobility.
- **Footpaths are fundamental infrastructure but widely inaccessible.** Uneven paving, overgrown vegetation (including overhanging tree branches), obstructive street furniture (including café furniture, signs and utility infrastructure), parked cars, and inadequate lighting were among the highest-rated hazards, generating physical and psychological stress. Maintenance and enforcement gaps were viewed as chronic issues.

- **Crossing the road remains a critical challenge.** Flush or misaligned kerb ramps, inaudible audio signals, and poorly designed transitions significantly reduce confidence. Participants reported that visible and tactile kerb definition, predictable tactile and auditory signals, and adequate crossing time are essential for safety.
- **Emerging urban design trends pose new risks.** Features such as floating bus stops, shared footpaths, and flush intersections were widely regarded as unsafe due to loss of tactile boundaries and markers and the introduction of fast, silent vehicles like e-scooters. Participants called for a balance between aesthetic innovation and functional accessibility.
- **Public transport accessibility is inconsistent.** While widely used, public transport services were described as unreliable due to inaccessible stop design, inconsistent audio announcements, and variable driver behaviour. Community transport was highly valued but not always available or accessible. Accessible paths of travel to get to the transport are critical.
- **Local governments have a responsibility to provide accessible and inclusive communication.** Many respondents reported difficulty obtaining information from their councils or receiving feedback after lodging complaints. Inaccessible processes, digital inaccessibility, and inconsistent responsiveness were common themes. These barriers undermine trust and limit the ability of residents who are blind or have low vision to engage fully with their local communities.
- **Self-advocacy is strong but exhausting.** Most participants expressed confidence in advocating for their needs but described emotional fatigue, lack of feedback, and the burden of repeatedly explaining accessibility requirements. Respondents emphasised that advocacy should not be a substitute for systemic accessibility.

Across all domains explored in the survey, participants' experiences converge on a clear principle: **an accessible community is a predictable, well-maintained, and clearly communicated environment.** Accessibility is not achieved solely through infrastructure - it depends equally on **responsive governance, community awareness, and inclusive design practices.**

The evidence gathered through this survey provides a strong foundation for practical reform and ongoing collaboration between people with lived experience, local councils, and urban designers to ensure that accessibility is not an aspiration but an everyday reality.

1. Background and purpose.

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT is the leading provider of Guide Dogs and orientation and mobility services that enable people with low vision or blindness to get around their communities safely and independently. Each year it works with about 4,000 people of all ages to help them achieve their mobility goals.

Its strategic direction is to lead an accessible and inclusive world for people who are blind or have low vision by 2030, achieved by broadening services to include low vision support, focusing on client-centric operations, and ensuring financial sustainability.

This focus is in keeping with a social model of disability, which sees disability as a result of societal barriers—physical, attitudinal, and communication-based—that prevent people from fully participating in life. Removing these barriers creates a more inclusive and equitable environment, thereby empowering people with disability.

Over the past 15 years or so, Australia has instigated significant legislative and policy changes to remove these barriers and enable an inclusive society where people with disability can participate as equal member of the community and be as independent as possible.

See Appendix A for Legislation.

All levels of government in Australia are actively planning in consultation with people with disability how they remove legacy barriers over time and avoid creating new barriers. Organisations such as Guide Dogs NSW/ACT are often asked to provide input into these planning processes. This provides both opportunity and capacity pressures for organisations such as Guide Dogs NSW/ACT, particularly at the local government level.

The Disability Inclusion Act 2014 (NSW) commits the NSW Government to making communities more inclusive and accessible for people with disability now and into the future. It requires local governments to develop Disability Inclusion Action Plans (DIAP) and review them every four years.

The Disability Inclusion Act 2023 (ACT) requires territory authorities (which includes local government functions) to prepare a Disability and Inclusion Plan (DIP).

In 2015, Guide Dogs NSW/ACT - through the Liveable Accessible Communities Taskforce, comprising Blind Citizen NSW, People with Disabilities Australia, and the Inner West Council - prepared a landmark resource for local government called Pathways to Inclusion to assist in their planning.

The resource contained advice and recommendations on how local governments could prepare responsive DIAPs/DIPs in line with government planning regulations and guidelines. The preparation of the resource was informed by extensive consultations with people who were blind or had low vision, input from other peak bodies, as well as guidance from council staff, specifically from the Inner West Council.

While **Pathways to Inclusion** is still in demand, it needs a review and update. This is to ensure it reflects the latest evidence base, good practice responses, as well as new content related to topics such as:

- Trends in urban streetscapes, especially in congested, multi-use metropolitan areas.
- Rise of digitisation.
- Impact of Smart Cities policies and technologies.
- Other challenges and constraints associated with trends in customer service.

This research will provide the evidence base for future advice for governments when planning for an inclusive society for people who are blind or have low vision.

2. Methodology.

2.1 Overview.

This research used a mix of desktop review and stakeholder engagement to inform the *Stakeholder Insights Report* for *Pathways to Inclusion: 2025 Update*. Two workshops were held to guide and validate the findings. The approach combined evidence with lived experience, drawing on input from people who are blind or have low vision, local government and disability advocacy organisations.

All research followed UTS's ethics guidelines and national standards.

2.2 Research approach.

Stakeholder Workshop.

In May 2025, UTS held an online workshop with representatives from Guide Dogs NSW/ACT, Inner West Council and People with Disabilities Australia. This helped shape the project and survey questions.

Desktop Review.

A **rapid review** of current research and policy was done to update the evidence base since the 2016 *Pathways to Inclusion* report. The review included:

- National and international literature, policies, and good practice examples.
- Trends in urban design, digital accessibility, Smart Cities, and inclusive customer service.

This review helped shape the design and content of the survey.

Stakeholder Survey.

An **online survey** was developed and tested with input from Guide Dogs NSW/ACT to ensure it was clear and accessible. It was shared with:

- Guide Dogs NSW/ACT Clients and networks, including Blind Citizens Australia, Vision Australia, People with Disability (PWDA), and Physical Disability Council of NSW.
- UTS Disability Research Network.

The survey was launched on 30 July and closed on 16 September 2025 via Qualtrics (UTS platform) and topics included:

- Navigating your community.
- Footpaths.
- Crossing the road.
- Public transport.
- Emerging urban design.
- Council.

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT helped refine the questions, test accessibility, and distribute the survey through email and newsletters.

A total of 310 responses were received: of these, one was a duplicate, and one was deemed invalid and were thus removed from the analysis. 30 respondents only answered the screening questions; and there were 20 requests for follow up contact.

See Appendix B for Survey, and Appendix C for respondent comments.

Validation Workshop.

Following preliminary data analysis, a second workshop was held with Guide Dogs NSW/ACT to:

- Confirm focus for project.
- Present preliminary findings from desktop review for validation.
- Gather further insights and contextual understanding from participants.
- Explore consensus and divergence around key challenges, barriers, and opportunities for more inclusive community planning and service delivery.

Feedback from this session helped to refine the findings and recommendations in the report.

Reporting and Recommendations.

Insights from the desktop review, survey, and stakeholder workshop was synthesised into a **Stakeholder Insights Report**, which includes:

- Summary of methodology and engagement approach.
- Evidence-based analysis of inclusion trends and challenges.
- Stakeholder perspectives on barriers and opportunities.
- Recommendations for the next stage of the *Pathways to Inclusion* project.

The report offers practical suggestions for updating the 2015 Pathways to Inclusion resource and guiding future planning by Guide Dogs NSW/ACT and partners.

2.3 Research limitations and qualifications.

While the desktop review and input from the stakeholders at the initial workshop provided the foundations for the survey questions, the questions were then rationalised in partnership with Guide Dogs NSW/ACT so that:

- An approach could be achieved that balanced the need for a range of data with the need to keep the survey at a length that would help to maximise response rates.
- Respondents could complete the survey in a short timeframe. Initially this was 10 minutes but was extended to 20 minutes soon after the survey launch in response to feedback. The extended timeframe recognised the value of the qualitative responses invited in the survey, and the additional time required by many people with low vision or blindness to navigate the document.
- Questions reflected the areas considered most important for this resource by Guide Dogs NSW/ACT. There were many other issues that could have been explored by the survey, but their inclusion would have made the survey too long and unwieldy.

The Institute of Public Policy and Governance (IPPG) was reliant on Guide Dogs NSW/ACT to distribute the survey.

To strengthen the integrity of the data IPPG has underpinned the findings and recommendations wherever possible, with the qualitative data from the surveys. It also conducted a validation workshop with Guide Dogs NSW/ACT to further garner its expertise before finalising the report.

Notwithstanding these qualifications, IPPG is confident in the quality and robustness of the insights and findings identified in the process evaluation stage.

3. Recommendations.

- **Recommendation 1: Embed co-design and consult** with people with lived experience in planning, implementation and governance processes.
- **Recommendation 2: Prioritise consistent maintenance and enforcement** of footpath, lighting, and vegetation standards.
- **Recommendation 3: Strengthen inclusive design** by embedding design (architectural and landscape), tactile and auditory cues in all new areas and upgrades.
- **Recommendation 4: Improve transport accessibility,** ensuring accessible paths of travel, audible announcements, and trained staff.
- **Recommendation 5: Review emerging urban design practices to ensure safety and tactile definition.**
- **Recommendation 6: Enhance council communication systems,** with accessible formats and transparent feedback loops.
- **Recommendation 7: Promote public awareness** of pedestrian safety and shared responsibility for accessibility.
- **Recommendation 8: Monitor and evaluate accessibility and inclusion outcomes** in partnership with people with disability.

4. Introduction.

In 2025, Guide Dogs NSW/ACT commissioned the Institute for Public Policy and Governance (IPPG) at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) to identify key and emerging barriers for people who are blind or have low vision as they seek to navigate their communities and interact with local government.

This project is intended to provide an evidence base for an update of the 2015 Pathways to Inclusion. This 2015 resource was produced by Guide Dogs NSW/ACT in collaboration with Blind Citizen NSW, People with Disabilities Australia, and the Inner West Council to provide practical advice for local government (Councils) to make their communities more inclusive for people who are blind or have low vision.

A lot has changed over the last ten years. The 2015 advice needs to be updated to reflect a contemporary context and capture new and continuing challenges being faced by people who are blind or have low vision.

This 2025 research project was initiated to identify current trends, issues and barriers encountered by people who are blind or have low vision when they try to move around as independently as possible in their communities. It included a rapid review of existing research and information on this issue, a workshop and a survey of people with lived experience. Subsequently, a further workshop was held with Guide Dogs NSW/ACT to validate key findings and recommendations.

The key output from this Project is a Stakeholder Insights Report, which will inform the direction and content of an updated guide and recommendations for local governments to be progressed at a later stage.

5. Survey results.

5.1 Profiles.

A total of 308 respondents consented to participate in the *Pathways to Inclusion survey* conducted by the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) on behalf of Guide Dogs NSW/ACT, forming a robust base for quantitative and qualitative analysis across subsequent sections of this report.

Participation in the survey was voluntary, with all responses remaining confidential and anonymous. Respondents confirmed that they had read and understood the Participant Information Statement, the purpose of the research, and the voluntary nature of their involvement.

The survey targeted people who are blind or have low vision, as well as individuals with other disabilities who regularly navigate public spaces. Participants were invited to share their experiences, challenges, and priorities relating to accessibility, mobility, and community inclusion.

Table 1 Participant Disability Profile

Vision and disability	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total
Blind / Severe Vision Loss	118	38
Low Vision / Partial Sight	133	43
Blind + Other Disability	22	7
Low Vision + Other Disability	17	6
No Disability / Non-disabled Allies or Professionals	18	6
Total	**308**	**100**

Most respondents (around 81 %) identified as having a form of vision impairment—either blindness or low vision—while about 13 % reported co-morbid disabilities in addition to vision loss. Only 6 % of respondents reported no disability, representing allies or professionals working in accessibility, inclusion, or council roles.

Women made up the largest proportion of respondents (approximately 59 %), followed by men (36 %). A small number of participants identified as non-binary or chose not to disclose gender (5 % combined).

Table 2 Participant location profile

Location	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total
Metropolitan NSW (Sydney, Newcastle, Wollongong)	156	50
Regional NSW (e.g., Central Coast, Hunter, Illawarra, Central West)	78	25
Rural NSW (e.g., Riverina, New England, Mid-North Coast)	42	14
Remote NSW (e.g., Far West, Western Plains, Outback)	12	4
Australian Capital Territory (ACT)	20	7
Total	**308**	**100**

More than half of respondents (around 50 %) reside in metropolitan NSW, particularly in Sydney and larger coastal cities such as Newcastle and Wollongong. A further 39 % live in regional or rural areas, reflecting Guide Dogs NSW/ACT's extensive statewide reach. The ACT accounted for 7 % of respondents, providing a smaller but important perspective from the territory context.

The data show that while most participants experience urban environments, a substantial proportion encounter accessibility challenges specific to regional and rural settings - such as limited public transport and fewer maintained footpaths. Respondents from remote areas frequently noted longer travel distances to services and greater reliance on informal networks for information about infrastructure changes.

This distribution confirms that the survey achieved broad geographic coverage across both NSW and the ACT, ensuring that the findings capture diverse experiences of accessibility in metropolitan, regional, rural, and remote communities.

Table 3 Participant age profile

Age group (years)	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total
18 and over but under 25	12	4
25 – 44	62	20
45 – 64	103	34
65 – 74	85	28
75 +	46	15
Total	**308**	**100**

Most participants were aged between **45 and 74 years**, representing more than 60% of the total sample. This reflects the demographic reality that vision impairment prevalence increases with age, particularly in later working life and early retirement.

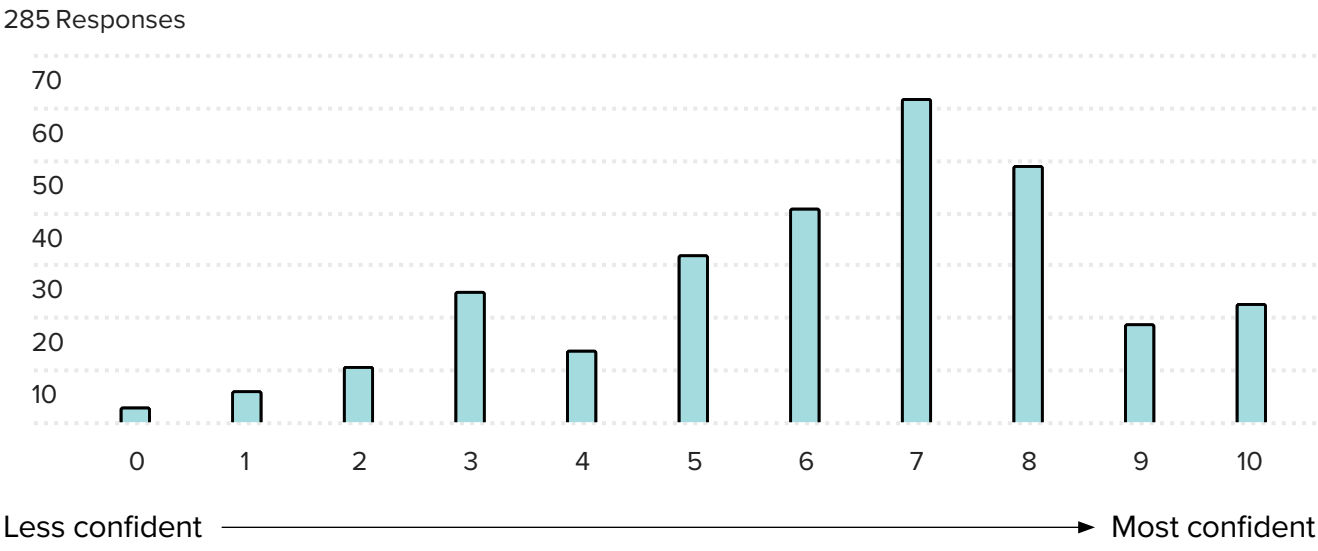
Respondents under 45 years constituted around one quarter of the sample, providing valuable perspectives from younger adults navigating education, employment, and technology-related accessibility.

5.2 Navigating your community: Results and analysis.

Question 1 – Confidence in getting around your local community.

Across 285 responses, confidence levels ranged from 0 to 10 (with 10 being the most confident), with a mean of 6.29. This indicates a moderate level of self-perceived confidence in community mobility. The distribution was wide, suggesting diverse experiences - some participants were highly confident while others experienced significant barriers. This information is shown in Figure 1 as a graph.

Figure 1 Confidence in getting around community



What people found difficult:

> "...cars (on) footpath, signs etc on footpath and outdoor dining on narrow footpaths..."
>
> "Navigating around people or cars on narrow footpaths where I may have to walk on the road to get through."
>
> "Uneven surfaces ...and I can also run into branches at face level."

> "Off leash dogs on the footpath, lead aggressive dogs not being contained by owner, e-bikes and skateboarding on footpaths."
>
> "Construction site, footpath diversions."
>
> "Wide footpaths with no consistent building line to follow."

Participant comments revealed that confidence was influenced by both environmental and social factors. Several respondents described challenges linked to poorly maintained footpaths, uncontrolled dogs and e-bikes and e-scooters on footpaths, which reduced their sense of safety and predictability. Others emphasised how orientation and mobility training or the use of support workers, rideshare, and public transport improved their independence.

A recurring theme was the variability of confidence depending on context. Many participants noted that confidence drops dramatically in unfamiliar areas or at night, suggesting that familiarity and environmental consistency are key determinants of safe mobility.

Overall, the data demonstrated that while many respondents feel moderately confident navigating their community, confidence is highly situational. Physical infrastructure, community behaviour, and accessibility of transport all influence this confidence. Interventions that target these environmental barriers and expand orientation and mobility training may enhance autonomy.

Question 2 – Getting around your local community compared to two years ago.

Among 275 responses, 21% felt **more confident**, 42% felt **less confident**, and 37% **reported no change**. The mean score (2.16 on a 3-point scale) indicates a slight decline in overall confidence since 2023. This information is shown as a graph in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Confidence in local community compared to 2 years ago

Those who reported reduced confidence often cited external factors such as deteriorating infrastructure, aggressive or unrestrained dogs, and e-bike usage on footpaths. One participant wrote:

> "Dangerous poorly maintained footpaths and bike riders running into me… people not recognising my dog as a seeing-eye dog."

Unfamiliar environments could also be quite nuanced. One respondent commented:

> "My confidence varies greatly depending on the specific destination, purpose and circumstances, even within my local community. …For instance, I might be moderately confident of getting to a particular shop in a mall but have very little confidence getting to another shop in the same mall."

Conversely, participants who felt more confident often commonly linked their improvement to training, practice, or the introduction of assistive supports:

> "I've had a lot of Guide Dog training and I've gained more independence."

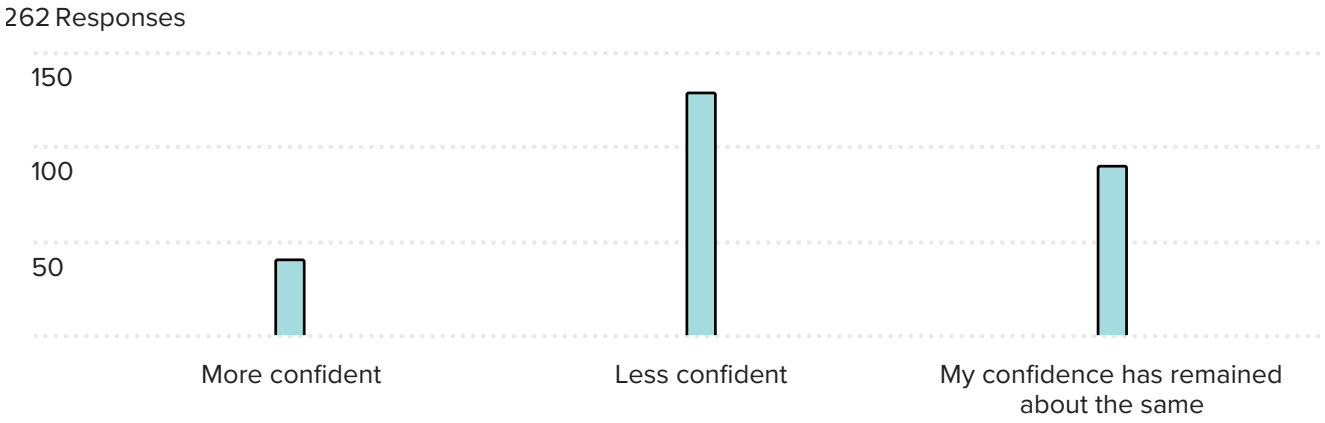
Some mentioned that relocation or changes in personal circumstances such as moving to a more accessible city or receiving a new guide dog increased their confidence. A minority described **no change**, noting stable routines or unchanged environmental conditions.

Confidence appears shaped less by individual capability than by familiarity, systemic and environmental conditions. Where local councils maintain accessible infrastructure and community awareness is high, confidence rises; where barriers persist, it declines. These findings highlight the importance of consistent urban accessibility and community education on guide-dog etiquette.

Question 3 – Getting around places that are unfamiliar compared to two years ago.

Of 262 respondents, 16% were **more confident**, 50% **less confident**, and 35% **about the same**. The mean score of 2.19 showed a general decline in confidence in unfamiliar settings. This is shown as a graph in Figure 3.

Figure 3 Confidence in getting around unfamiliar places compared to 2 years ago



Unfamiliar environments evoked greater anxiety and unpredictability. Participants frequently referred to “crowds,” “poor lighting,” and “unpredictable obstacles.” Environmental design, particularly the removal of curbs and introduction of light rail, was cited as decreasing confidence.

However, some participants identified technological and behavioural strategies that improved independence, including GPS apps (Google Maps, Seeing AI) and smartphone alerts.

> “Over the past two years my assistive technology skills have increased… I can now use apps like Google Maps and Seeing AI.”

Others attributed increased confidence to their guide dog partnership, which enhanced safety and orientation. Yet even these participants emphasised the limits of confidence where tactile or audible cues were inconsistent.

Confidence in unfamiliar environments remains fragile, and highly dependent on environmental predictability, lighting, and navigational information. Technological literacy and guide-dog support mitigate some barriers, but infrastructure and crowding continue to restrict independent mobility.

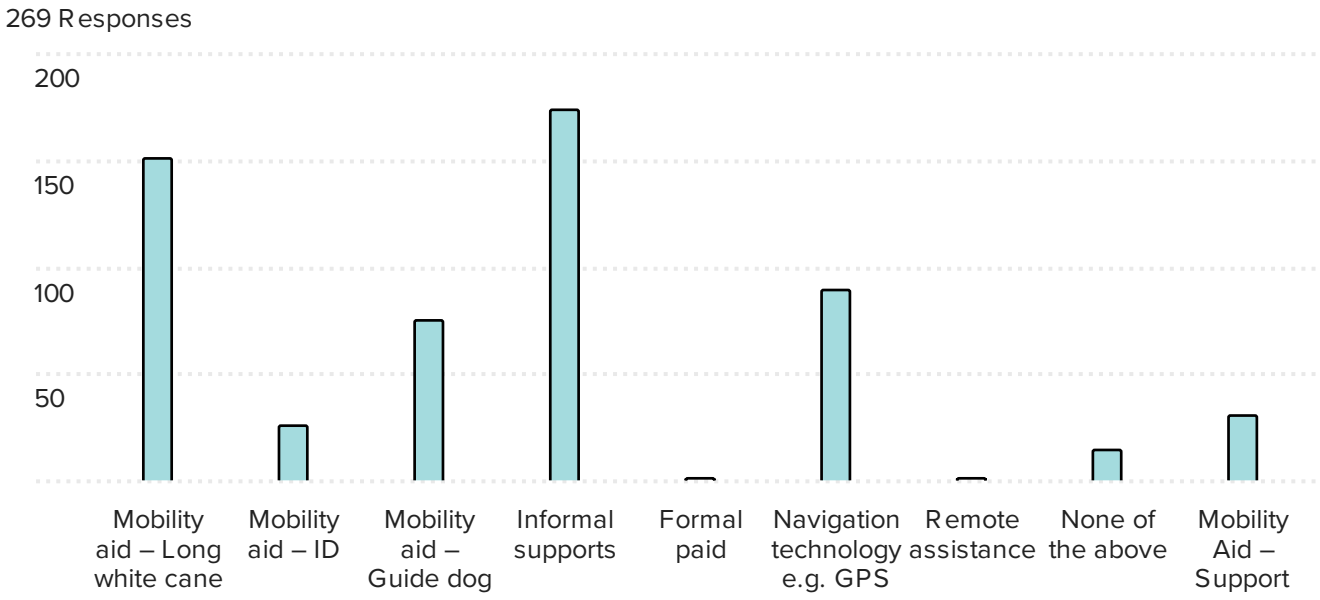
Question 4 – Supports used by people who are blind or have low vision to help get around community.

The most common supports among 269 respondents were informal supports:

- family/friends (n = 174),
- long white canes (n = 152),
- navigation technology (n = 90), and
- guide dogs (n = 76).

Formal paid supports such as support workers and remote assistance apps were rarely used (both 0 responses), while 15 participants didn't use any formal supports. This information is shown as a graph in Figure 4.

Figure 4 Supports used by people who are blind or have low vision



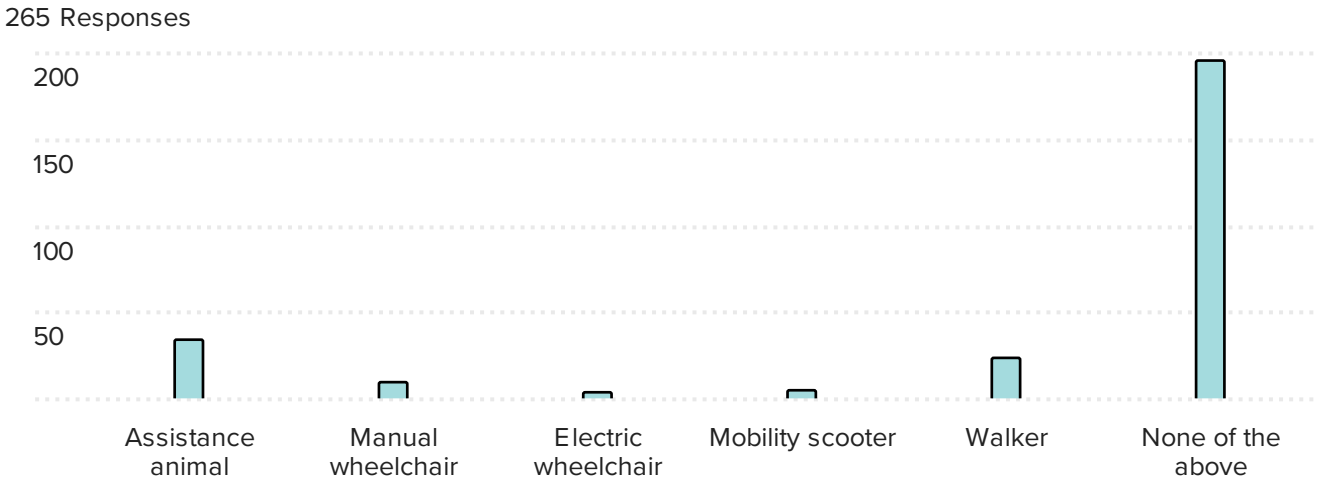
The pattern indicates heavy reliance on informal social networks rather than formal services. This may reflect limited funding, availability, or awareness of remote/ paid options. The strong uptake of long canes and guide dogs underscores the continuing importance of mobility aids for independence. Comments elsewhere in this report suggest participants value technologies like GPS as complementary rather than substitutive - used to “plan routes” and “check progress,” not to replace physical orientation skills.

Support ecosystems are primarily community-based and device-assisted. Expanding access to formal mobility supports and promoting digital literacy could reduce over-reliance on informal help and strengthen independent mobility.

Question 5 – Other supports used to get around your community.

Of the 265 responses, the vast majority (74%) indicated that they didn’t use any of the listed supports to get around their community. A smaller proportion used an assistance animal (35%), walker (25%), manual wheelchair (10%), electric wheelchair (5%), or mobility scooter (6%). This information is shown as a graph in Figure 5.

Figure 5 Other supports used in the community



These data points suggest that for most participants, visual-impairment-related aids rather than broader mobility devices are the primary aids used by respondents. Those who did use additional aids typically experienced comorbid mobility impairments or complex disabilities. The small but notable use of walkers and wheelchairs underscores the intersection of vision impairment with other physical limitations—an important consideration for holistic service design.

Those planning for an inclusive society or providing services, should recognise the diversity of functional needs among people who are blind or have low vision. Training and planning must recognise that people may have comorbidities and address both vision and physical accessibility to ensure safe, independent travel.

Question 6 – Supports used when travelling to unfamiliar or infrequently visited places.

Out of 265 responses, 63% said yes and 37% said no, reflecting that most participants increase their reliance on supports in less familiar contexts.

Participants described layering supports in complex ways – combining guide dogs, long canes, GPS and assistance from support workers or family. For example:

> "At night I will use my long cane in tandem with my guide dog."

Others discussed adaptive strategies such as TripView alarms, Google Maps route saving, and remote video calls for reassurance. Several respondents shared detailed accounts of multi-modal assistance, integrating physical, human, and digital supports. Those who did not use more supports often cited already having comprehensive assistance or feeling unable to access extra help.

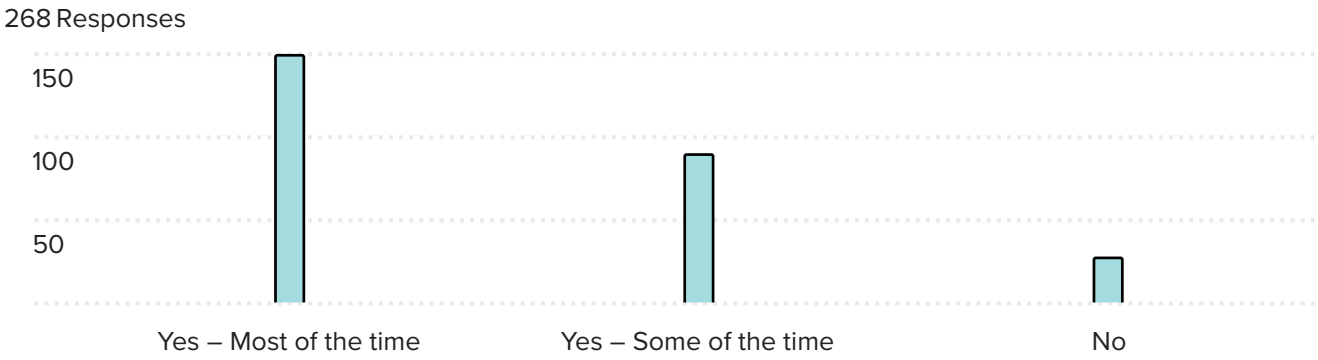
One respondent emphasised the critical role her guide dog plays in her life:

Findings illustrate the flexible, situational nature of mobility support use. The need for layered supports in unfamiliar settings highlights the importance of training in assistive technology and the value of accessible information systems to reduce dependence on others.

Question 7 – Information to plan your journey.

Of the 268 responses, 56% answered **Yes – Most of the time**, 34% **Yes – Some of the time**, and 10% **No**, indicating that while most participants can usually access information to plan their journey, significant accessibility issues persist.
This information is shown as a graph in Figure 6.

Figure 6 Access to information to plan journeys



Participants identified digital accessibility barriers, especially with screen readers and mapping platforms. Common challenges included inaccurate GPS coordinates, inaccessible timetables, and difficulties locating entry points or lifts. Several respondents expressed frustration that mainstream apps (Google Maps, Uber) lack sufficient detail for non-visual navigation:

> "Directions for the general population don't tell me the streets I need to cross… finding the door can be near impossible."

A few participants described positive experiences using accessible apps such as Moovit, or with support from family, indicating that technological solutions can work when well designed. However, inconsistent data and inaccessible web interfaces increase cognitive load and travel anxiety.

Information access remains a systemic barrier to independent travel for people who are blind or have low vision. Consistent accessibility standards for transport information, along with the integration of detailed non-visual wayfinding data, are critical to improving equitable mobility.

Summary of findings.

Across all seven survey questions about Navigating Your Community, the results depict a community that values independence but continues to face physical, social, and informational barriers. Confidence and autonomy are bolstered by guide dogs, mobility aids, and assistive technologies, yet undermined by inconsistent infrastructure and digital inaccessibility. The findings underscore the need for cross-sector collaboration between local councils, transport authorities, and disability service providers to build inclusive environments that enable confident, independent navigation for all.

Confidence levels for getting around local communities ranged widely, averaging 6.29 out of 10 (10 being the most confident), suggesting that while some people feel capable and independent, others face persistent barriers to mobility. Comments revealed how environmental and social conditions shape confidence. Many respondents described unpredictable hazards such as poorly maintained footpaths, overgrown vegetation, and shared footpath use with e-bikes and scooters, which reduced their sense of safety and control. Others highlighted how orientation and mobility training and assistive technologies restored a degree of confidence and autonomy.

Participant comments in the survey vividly illustrate these findings: **“Navigating around people or cars on narrow footpaths where I may have to walk on the road to get through”** and **“Off-leash dogs on the footpath… e-bikes and skateboarding on footpaths”**.

Respondents generally described their confidence as fragile - high when navigating familiar routes or using assistive apps, but low in unfamiliar areas where signage and auditory cues were missing, unpredictable or inconsistent.

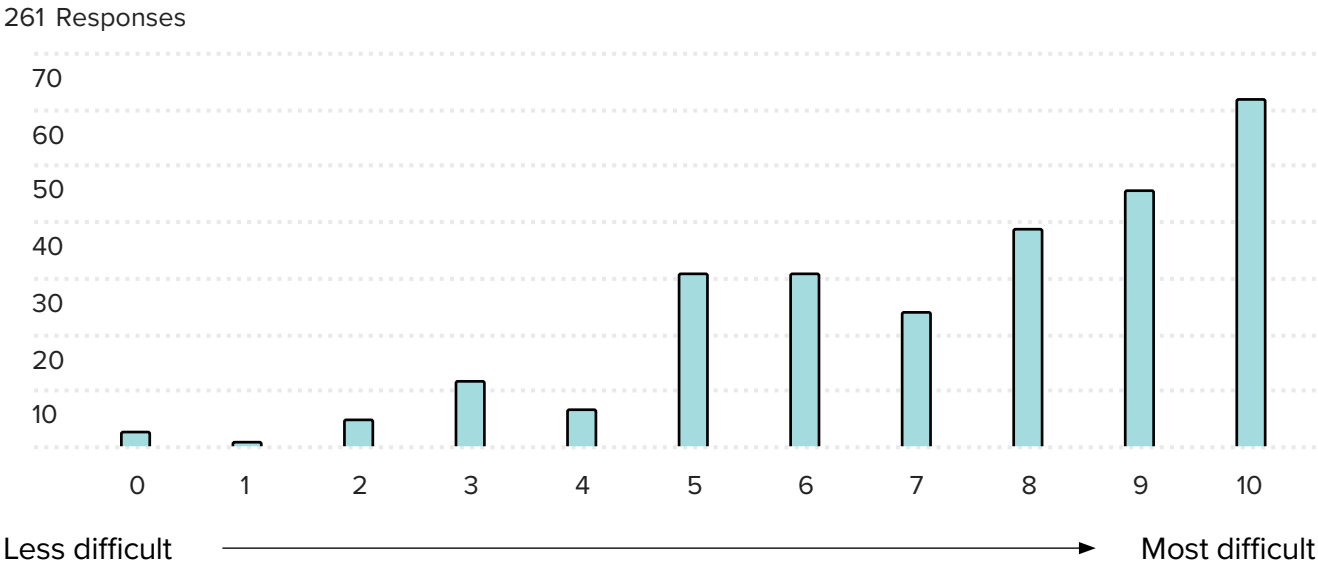
Overall, survey findings and research evidence converge on a shared theme: that confidence in navigating one’s community is not solely a personal attribute but a reflection of how inclusive and predictable the built environment is. Environmental continuity, auditory and tactile wayfinding cues, and the integration of accessible digital tools all contribute to a greater sense of independence. When these features are absent or inconsistently applied, confidence drops, and reliance on others increases. The findings reinforce that designing cities for independent navigation requires multi-layered attention to both infrastructure and information accessibility.

5.3 Footpaths: Results and analysis.

Question 8 – No footpath.

Among 261 respondents, the average difficulty rating for areas with no footpath was 7.39 out of 10 (10 being the most difficult), indicating a consistently high level of challenge. This information is shown as a graph in Figure 7.

Figure 7 No footpaths



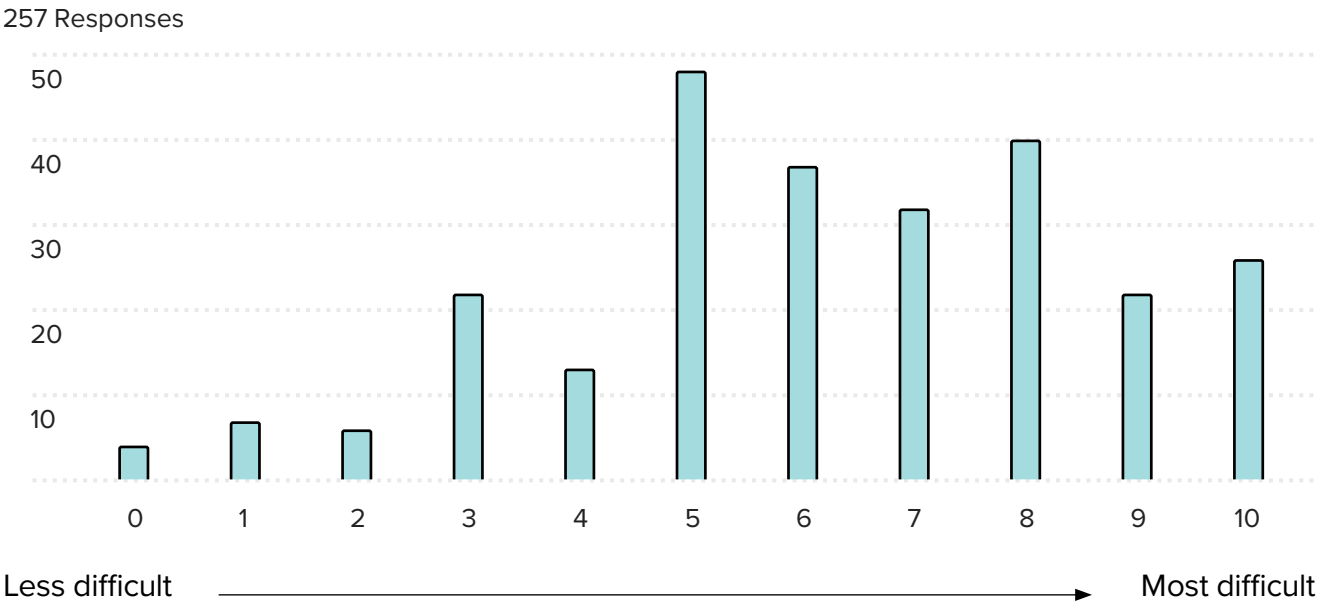
Participants expressed frustration and anxiety about being forced to walk on roads, describing this as **“very dangerous when cars come close”** and **“terrifying, especially with my Guide Dog”**. Many reported that uneven ground surfaces, drainage ditches, and lack of verges made walking impossible or unsafe. The absence of dedicated footpaths was particularly concerning in suburban and regional areas, where pedestrian infrastructure is incomplete or inconsistent.

The results suggest that for people who are blind or have low vision, the absence of a footpath is not merely an inconvenience but a fundamental barrier to participation, removing the option of safe, independent mobility altogether.

Question 9 – Footpath only on one side of the road.

Responses produced a mean difficulty score of approximately **6.5 out of 10 (10 being the most difficult), showing that limited footpath coverage still presents considerable difficulty. Respondents commented that** “crossing back and forth between sides is confusing” and that “cars park on the side with the footpath, forcing me to the other side without one”. Others said that determining where the footpath continues across side streets or intersections was “nearly impossible without clear cues”. Figure 8 shows this information as a graph.

Figure 8 Footpath on only one side of road

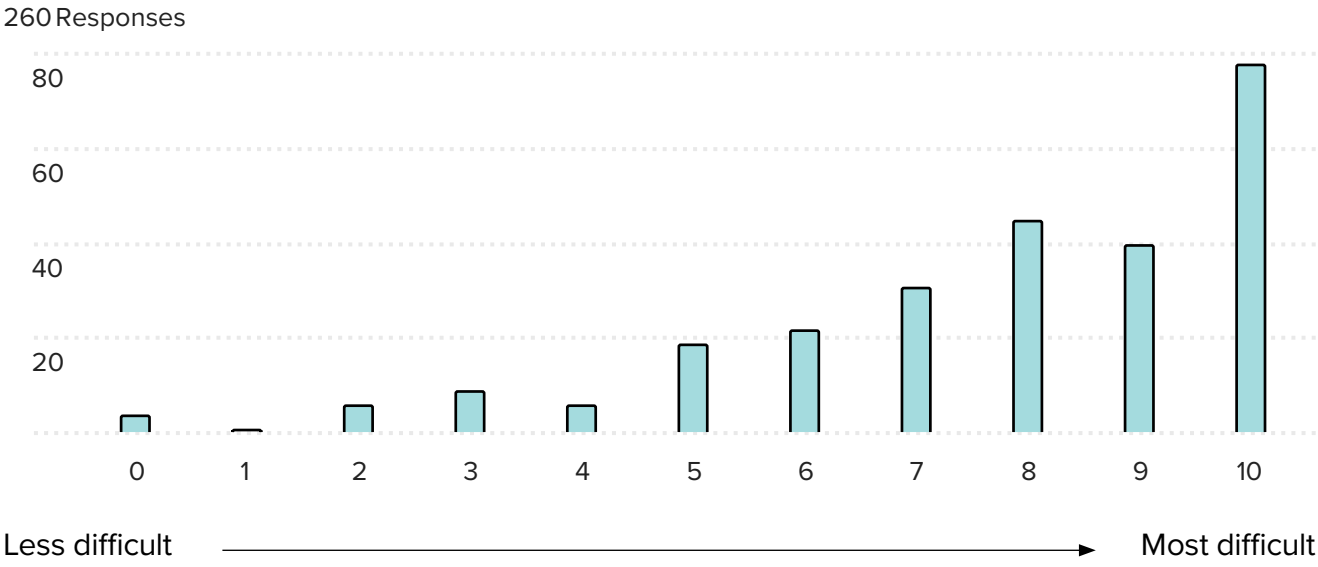


The findings highlight how fragmented infrastructure creates additional cognitive and navigational load for pedestrians with vision impairment. Even where one side is accessible, its discontinuity or obstruction often negates that advantage.

Question 10 – Uneven surfaces on footpaths.

This was among the highest-rated hazards, with a mean difficulty of 7.7 out of 10 (with 10 being the most difficult), reflecting widespread problems with surface quality. This information is shown in a graph in Figure 9.

Figure 9 Uneven surfaces on footpaths



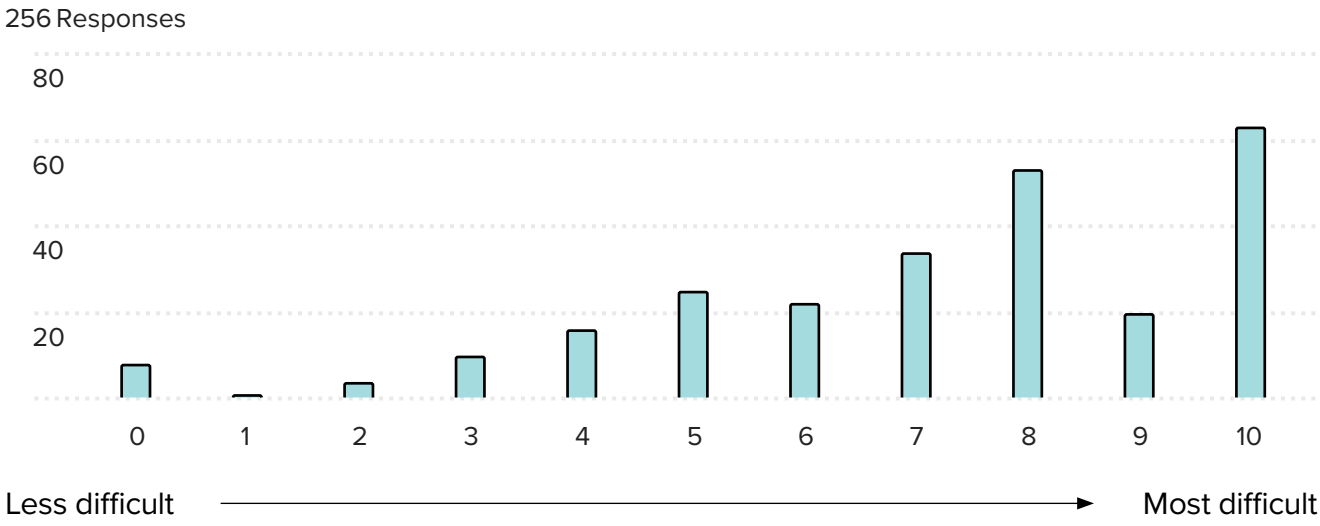
Participants reported **“losing balance”** and “**cane jamming painfully in cracks**”. Others described injuries from falls or from trying to correct direction after tripping. Comments such as **“it’s unsafe with my wheelchair and uncomfortable with all the constant bumps”** indicate that surface irregularities are physically and psychologically fatiguing.

Poor maintenance amplifies risk, especially at night or in wet conditions, when hazards are harder to detect. Many noted that maintenance issues persisted even after being reported to councils, suggesting a lack of systematic repair processes.

Question 11 – Low-Hanging Branches or Overgrown Vegetation.

Of 256 responses, the average difficulty rating exceeded **7 out of 10** (with 10 being the most difficult), underscoring the prevalence of this problem. This information is shown in Figure 10 as a graph.

Figure 10 Low-hanging branches



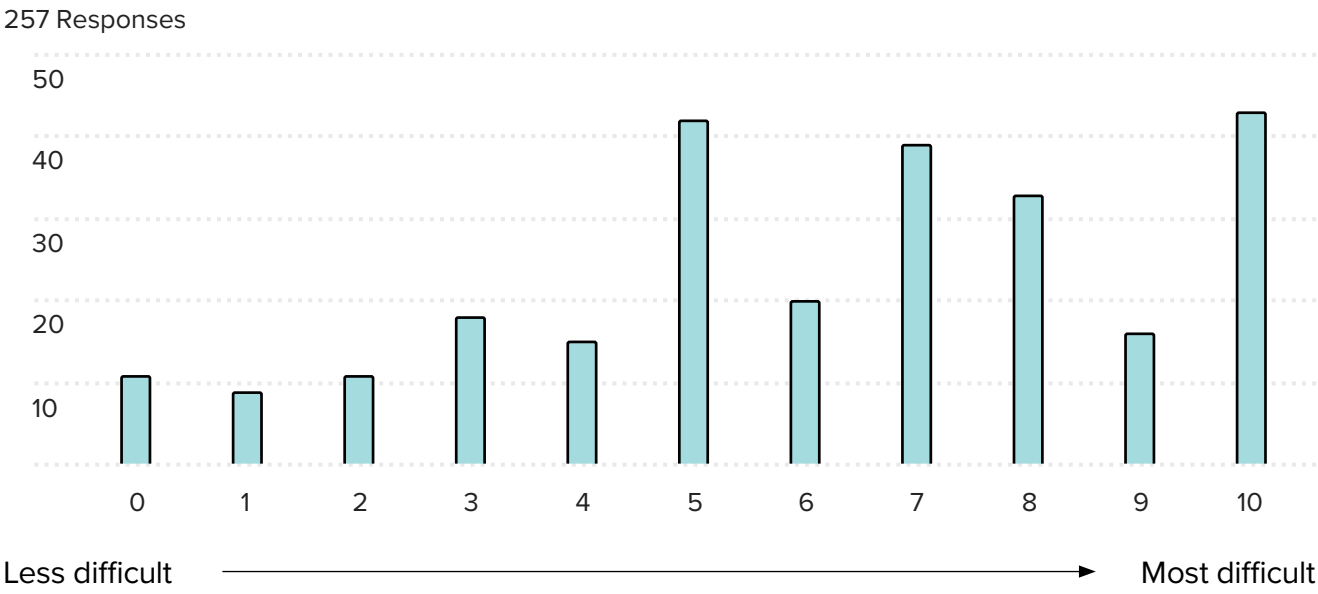
Participants vividly described **“running into branches at face level”** or being forced onto roads to avoid vegetation. For guide dog users, overgrowth can disrupt familiar routes, making it harder for dogs to navigate safely along the clear, direct paths they’ve been trained to follow.

These experiences suggest that overgrown vegetation is not a trivial maintenance issue but a recurring accessibility barrier. Routine vegetation management and enforcement of clearance standards could significantly improve pedestrian safety.

Question 12 – Electricity Boxes or Utility Pillas Blocking the Path.

Respondents rated this hazard between **6 and 7 out of 10 (with 10 being the most difficult)**, Figure 11 shows this information as a graph.

Figure 11 Electricity boxes or utility pillars blocking path



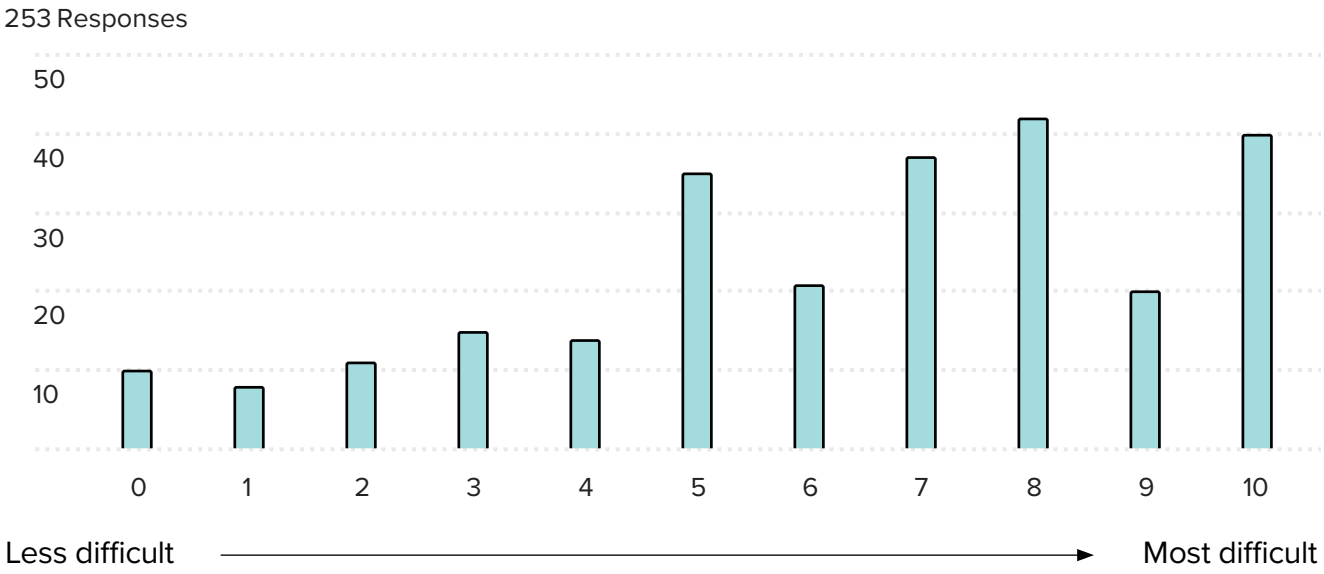
Respondents explained that these obstacles are difficult to anticipate and often installed in the middle of paths, creating **“narrow bottlenecks that my cane misses but my shoulder hits”.** Several noted injuries from sharp corners, echoing one participant’s vivid comment: **“My cane goes under but my head hits the edge—ouch!”**

Such barriers demonstrate how poorly placed infrastructure can compromise accessibility even on newly constructed paths. Their impact is amplified by a lack of visual contrast or tactile delineation.

Question 13 – Bollards on footpaths.

Participants rated bollards a mean difficulty of **6.5 out of 10** (with 10 being most difficult), Figure 12 is a graph showing this information.

Figure 12 Bollards on the footpath



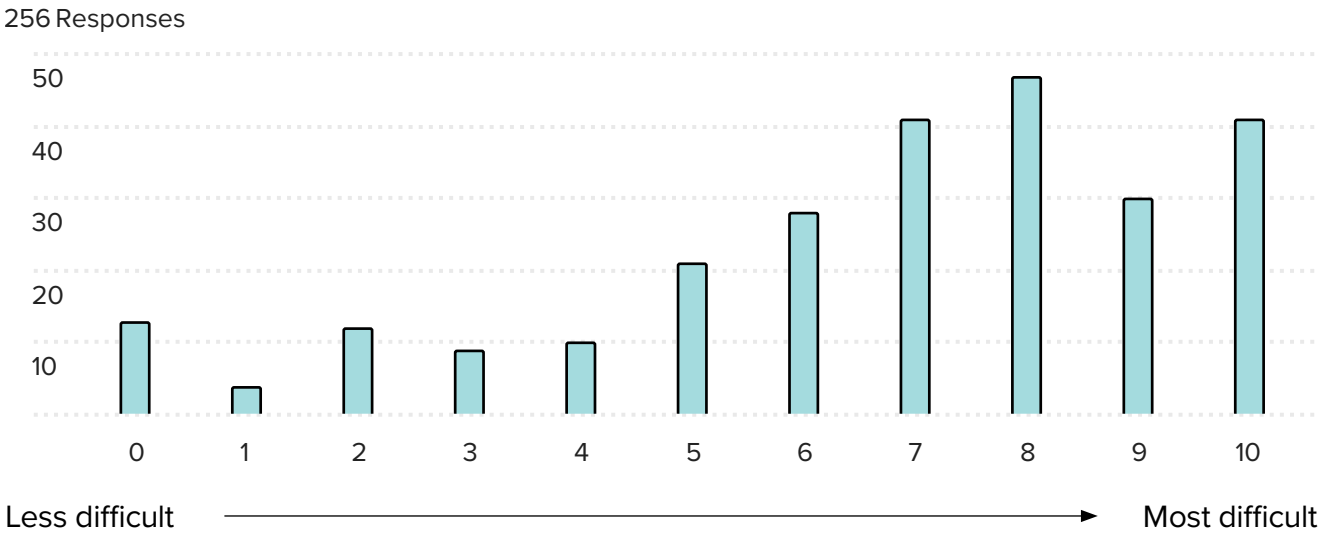
While bollards are intended to prevent vehicle access, but their inconsistent height and spacing create significant risks. Participants noted that **“some are invisible to cane tips” or “too close together for guide dogs to navigate safely”.** Several respondents mentioned shoulder or head impacts from unmarked bollards, especially in dark or crowded areas.

The results illustrate how compliance with physical standards alone is insufficient; safe bollard design requires predictable placement, consistent height, and clear tactile or luminance contrast.

Question 14 – Obstructions such as street furniture, shop signs, or bins.

Among 256 responses, the average rating was **around 7 out of 10** (with 10 being the most difficult), revealing that such obstructions are widespread and hazardous, Figure 13 is a graph showing this information.

Figure 13 Obstructions on footpath



Respondents cited **“signs on narrow footpaths”, “tables and chairs forcing me onto the road”,** and **“bins left in the middle of the path”.** The comments demonstrate that while these items are temporary or movable, their cumulative effect is constant unpredictability.

Many emphasised the psychological toll of these repeated near-misses - **“it’s exhausting to be constantly alert for something new in my way”.** Enforcement of clear-path rules and public education on footpath etiquette were common suggestions.

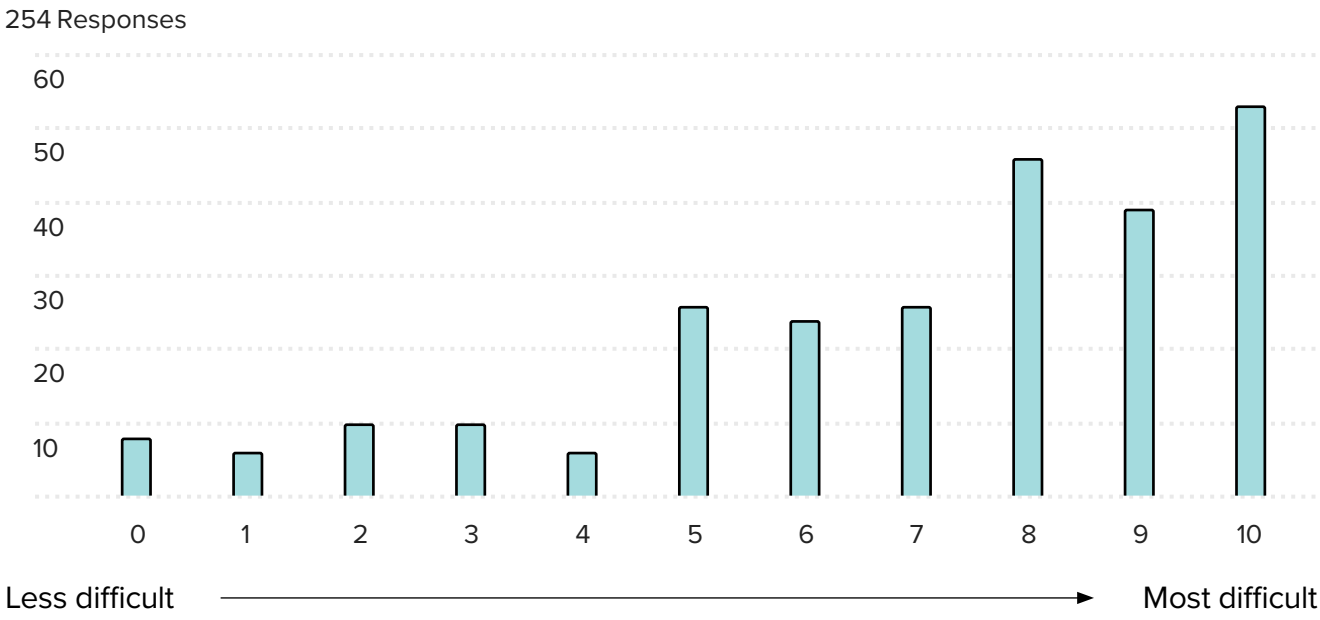
Question 15 – Cars Parked on Footpaths or Across Driveways.

This question received one of the highest average difficulty scores - **around 7.5 out of 10** (with 10 being the most difficult), Figure 14 is a graph showing this information.

Participants described being forced to walk on the road, which they found extremely unsafe: **“I have to step into traffic to get around a car”** and **“people treat footpaths like extensions of their driveway”.**

These behaviours erode trust in the pedestrian network. Respondents emphasised that guide dogs are trained to follow footpath lines, not weave between vehicles, so illegal parking disrupts both human and animal navigation. Stronger parking enforcement and public awareness were seen as essential preventive measures.

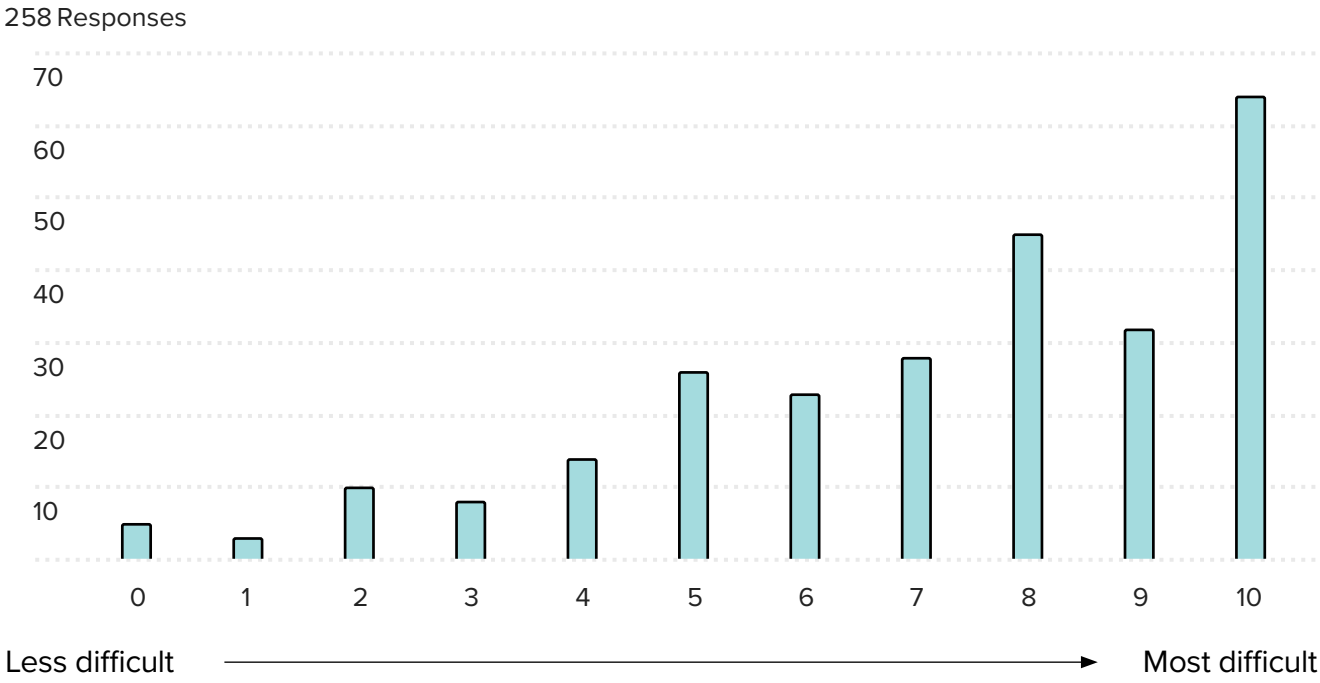
Figure 14 Cars parked on footpath



Question 16 – Temporary Barriers or Council Works.

Of 258 respondents, the mean difficulty was 7.3 out of 10 (with 10 being the most difficult), showing that temporary works are often poorly managed from an accessibility perspective, Figure 15 is a graph showing this information.

Figure 15 Temporary barriers



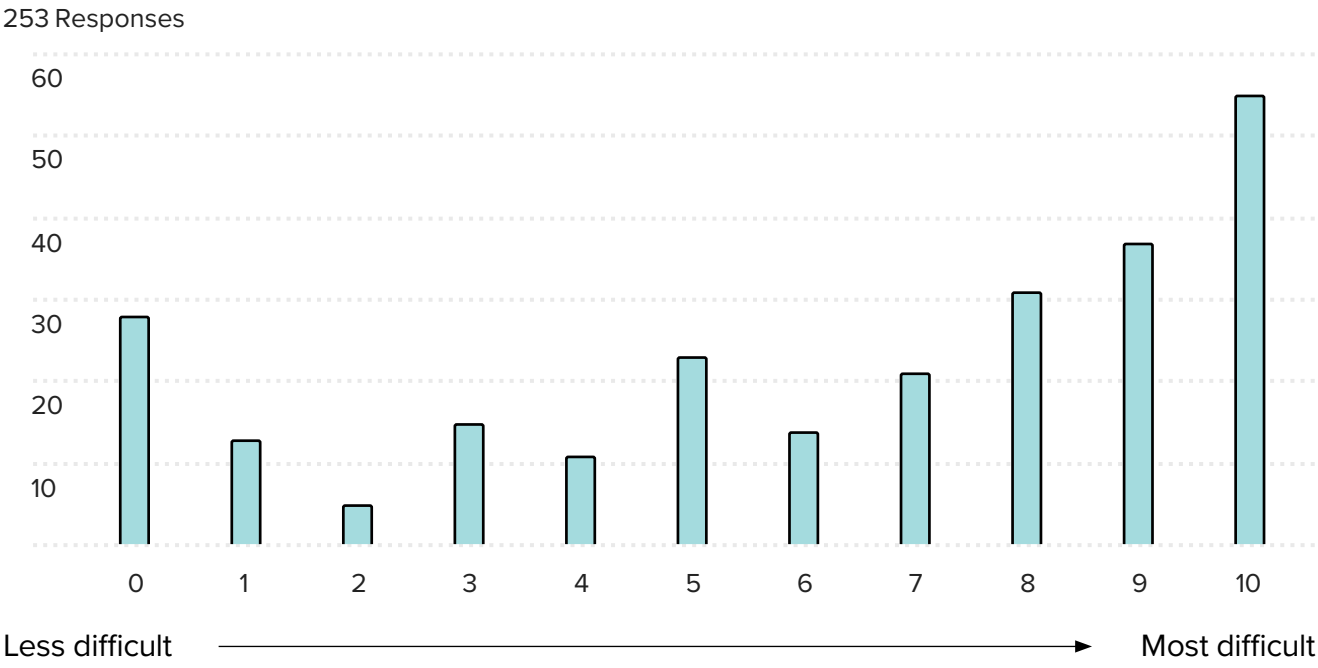
Participants commented that **“construction signs block the path”** and **“detours are never accessible”.** Others reported nearly walking into fencing or scaffolding because of insufficient tactile or audio cues.

This reflects a systemic issue rather than isolated oversight: temporary traffic management plans often fail to account for non-visual navigation needs. Accessible detour pathways, high-contrast barriers, and audible warning cues could dramatically improve safety.

Question 17 – Poor or inconsistent lighting.

This factor scored an average of **7.1 out of 10 (with 10 being the most difficult)**, Figure 16 is a graph showing this information.

Figure 16 Poor or inconsistent lighting



Participants with low vision described **“black cement footpaths at night when lighting doesn’t reflect back”** and **“bright lighting that causes glare instead of clarity”.** The lack of consistent illumination undermined confidence, particularly for those travelling alone.

Lighting inconsistency compounded other risks—uneven paving, signage, and overgrowth—making even familiar routes hazardous after dark. Some respondents noted that adequate lighting is a matter of equality, not comfort: **“It’s not about brightness; it’s about being able to see hazards like everyone else.”**

Question 18 - Other difficult situations when using a footpath.

Open-ended responses to Question 18 revealed diverse but recurring themes. Participants mentioned uncontrolled dogs, e-bikes and e-scooters on footpaths, construction diversions, and puddles after rain. Many highlighted sensory and spatial confusion: **“wide footpaths with no consistent building line to follow”** and **“winding paths where the shoreline disappears and reappears”.**

One respondent captured the issue succinctly: **“The footpath is a maze of obstacles -cars, bins, branches, and bikes”.** Participants viewed these as among the most serious daily challenges.

Summary of Findings.

Participants described footpaths as fundamental to their ability to move safely and independently.

However, footpath environments pose a high and pervasive barrier to safe, independent travel. The most frequently cited hazards - uneven surfaces, vegetation, obstructions, parked cars, and poor lighting - represent a mix of **design, maintenance, and behavioural failures.**

Table 4 Footpaths mean difficulty

Question	Footpath Situation	Mean Difficulty (1-10)	Rank (most - least)
Q10	Uneven surfaces (tree roots, sunken paving, poor maintenance)	7.7	1
Q18	Other difficult situations (dogs, e-bikes, puddles, winding paths)	7.7	2
Q15	Cars parked on footpaths or across driveways	7.5	3
Q8	No footpath	7.4	4

Question	Footpath Situation	Mean Difficulty (1-10)	Rank (most - least)
Q16	Temporary barriers or council works	7.3	5
Q17	Poor or inconsistent lighting	7.1	6
Q11	Low-hanging branches or overgrown vegetation	7.0	7
Q14	Obstructions such as street furniture, signs, or bins	7.0	8
Q12	Electricity boxes or utility pillars blocking the path	6.7	9
Q13	Bollards on footpaths	6.5	10
Q9	Footpath only on one side of the road	6.5	11

These results indicate that the most difficult conditions for navigating footpaths relate to surface quality, obstructions, and maintenance failures. Uneven paving, overgrown vegetation, and vehicles obstructing paths were rated among the most challenging, while isolated structural elements such as bollards and utility boxes, though inconvenient, presented comparatively lower difficulty. The findings highlight the need for consistent maintenance and enforcement to ensure safe pedestrian access.

Qualitative comments reveal that these hazards not only increase physical risk but also produce psychological fatigue, anxiety, and avoidance of walking altogether. Respondents linked these challenges directly to council maintenance practices, public behaviour, and lack of enforcement of footpath regulations.

Collectively, the findings depict a public realm that remains unpredictable and, in many areas, unsafe for people who are blind or have low vision. Improvements require both **infrastructure reform** - better path design, lighting, and maintenance - and **community education** to promote shared responsibility for accessible footpaths. The evidence underscores that accessibility is achieved not through isolated interventions but through consistent application of inclusive design and maintenance standards.

5.4 Crossing the road: Results and analysis.

Question 19 – Signalised crossings with aligned kerb ramps.

Of 253 respondents, most rated these crossings as **moderately easy to use,** averaging **around 5 out of 10 for difficulty (with 10 being the most difficult).**

Participants noted that correctly aligned ramps make navigation **"straightforward and predictable"**, yet this depended heavily on consistent tactile indicators and the presence of audio-tactile signals (ATS). Misalignment or poor ramp gradients were described as **"confusing and dangerous"**. Respondents emphasised that tactile cues combined with audible feedback provide the confidence needed to cross busy roads safely.

Question 20 – Pedestrian (Zebra) crossings.

Average difficulty was **about 5.5 out of 10 (with 10 being the most difficult)**, reflecting mixed experiences. Respondents appreciated their visual clarity for drivers but said zebra crossings remain **"risky without audio cues or raised surfaces".** Several participants reported vehicles failing to yield: **"Drivers keep going even when I'm halfway across".** Confidence improved where crossings were well-lit and properly maintained, but the absence of kerb ramps or tactile ground surface indicators (TGSIs) greatly reduced safety perception.

Question 21 – Raised thresholds that continue footpath level across road.

This design was rated by participants as 7.5 out of 10 (with 10 being the most difficult).

Participants described these as **"confusing"** and **"impossible to tell where the road begins".** Without a kerb drop or tactile delineation, many feared unknowingly stepping into traffic. A respondent wrote: **"Flat footpaths with no colour or texture change are terrifying - it feels like walking blindfolded onto a road".** Confidence was particularly low among guide dog users, whose animals depend on kerb cues to identify safe stopping points.

Question 22 – Crossings with refuge in middle of road.

The average difficulty was **around 6.5 out of 10 (with 10 being the most difficult)**. Participants valued the mid-point refuge for providing a "pause to reassess traffic flow", yet others found it "narrow and confusing". Poor tactile placement and decorative landscaping often obscured the correct alignment: "The refuge has gardens—I can't tell where to go next". For individuals with mobility limitations, uneven surfaces and poor gradients at refuges introduced tripping risks.

Question 23 – Comments on crossing designs.

Open-ended comments reflected strong themes of **misalignment, lack of audible signals, and flush designs** that eliminate kerb detection. Many said that "crossings without tactile contrast or sound are overwhelming". Participants identified malfunctioning ATS devices and inconsistent pedestrian timing as critical barriers: "The beepers don't always work, and the lights change too fast". Several called for new technologies to report broken ATS units easily, for example, through a smartphone tap or Near-field communication (NFC) system.

Question 24 – Ramp too steep.

Among 242 responses, the mean difficulty was **around 6 out of 10 (with 10 being the most difficult).**

Steep ramps were described as "jarring for wheelchairs and canes alike". Participants reported fatigue, instability, and loss of orientation. Steep gradients combined with uneven transitions created "the feeling of falling into the road". This issue underscores how small deviations from gradient standards under AS 1428.1 (≤ 1:8 recommended maximum) have major accessibility impacts.

Question 25 – Crossings too wide or too far from audio signals.

Mean difficulty was **approximately 7 out of 10 (with 10 being the most difficult)**, showing significant concern.

Long crossing distances increased anxiety: "Halfway across and the beeper stops". Wide roads and distant signals made orientation difficult, forcing reliance on traffic noise. Respondents emphasised that "shorter, direct crossings with midpoint cues" feel far safer.

Question 26 – Poor transition between ramp and footpath or road.

Average difficulty **around 7.3 out of 10 (with 10 being the most difficult).**

Participants cited abrupt level changes and lip edges catching canes or wheels. "My cane gets stuck where the path meets the road", one wrote. Such transitions interrupt the smooth, predictable travel surface required for independence.

Question 27 – No ramp on the opposite side.

247 respondents recorded a mean difficulty of **7.6 out of 10 (with 10 being the most difficult).** This was one of the highest concern areas. Many described getting "trapped mid-crossing with no way out". The inconsistency of ramps across intersections was a major source of fear and frustration. Respondents requested mandatory audits to ensure reciprocal ramp design and consistent tactile alignment.

Question 28 – Misaligned ramps or ramps into intersections.

With 241 responses, the mean score was **approximately 7.7 out of 10**, indicating high difficulty.

Participants explained that ramps pointing into traffic or misaligned with the opposite kerb created acute danger: "The dip should face where it's safe to cross". Misalignment forces users to adjust their direction in the middle of traffic flow, undermining confidence and safety.

Question 29 – Unexpected obstacles at crossings.

With a mean difficulty of **7.8 out of 10 (with 10 being the most difficult)**, obstacles such as poles, bins, signs and bollards had one of the highest barrier ratings.

Respondents described frequent collisions with street furniture: "You don't expect a bin in the middle of a crossing". These obstacles create both physical injury risk and emotional stress. Participants urged planners to implement "clear-path standards" and routine audits around intersections.

Question 30 – Unable to identify crossing because flush with road.

This was rated as the **most difficult situation**, averaging **8.2 out of 10 (with 10 being the most difficult).**

Participants wrote that "it's easy to be in the road without knowing it". The absence of kerb edges or gradient changes eliminated essential orientation cues. Respondents expressed fear and avoidance of flush designs: "I don't go to the city anymore because of them".

Question 31 – Inaudible audio signals at crossings.

Average difficulty was **8 out of 10** (with 10 being the most difficult), reflecting extreme dependence on sound for safe navigation.

Respondents said that silent or broken signals made crossings "impossible without assistance"**.** Others described environmental noise masking beepers or the use of quiet electric vehicles making auditory orientation unreliable. This issue was cited as a major reason for avoiding city centres.

Question 32 – Other situations that make crossings difficult.

Participants described **erratic driver behaviour, electric vehicles without sound, sloped footpaths, and blocked crossings** by buses or construction equipment

One respondent wrote: "At peak hour, cars stop over the crossing and I can't get through". Others described noise pollution from roadworks and crowds as making orientation "impossible". Several comments highlighted fear of fast e-bikes and poor weather conditions reducing auditory cues.

Question 33 – Further comments on road crossings.

Participants reiterated that crossings are among the most stressful aspects of mobility. They emphasised that risk stems not only from infrastructure but from driver behaviour and environmental conditions. One participant wrote: "The lights went green eight times and I still couldn't cross because cars blocked the intersection".

Other themes included fatigue, wind and rain interfering with hearing, and a need for **driver education and enforcement** to respect pedestrian priority.

Summary of Findings.

Road crossings were widely regarded as one of the most difficult and stressful aspects of independent mobility, posing consistent barriers to safety and confidence.

Table 5 Crossing the road mean difficulty

Question	Crossing Situation	Mean Difficulty (1-10)	Rank (most - least)
Q30	Unable to identify the road crossing point because it is flush with the road	7.2	1
Q28	Misaligned – into intersection and/ or not aligned to the opposite kerb ramp	7.1	2
Q31	Inaudible audio signal at ATS/lights	6.9	3
Q21	Raised thresholds that continue the footpath level across the road, without a kerb ramp that indicates the kerb edge	6.8	4
Q27	No ramp on the opposite side of the road	6.7	5
Q25	Ramp or road crossing is too wide, making it hard to orient yourself or is too far from the lights	6.6	6
Q26	Poor transition between ramp and footpath or road	6.5	7
Q19	Signalised crossings where the kerb ramp aligns with the ramp on the opposite side	6.4	8
Q24	Ramp is too steep	6.3	9

Question	Crossing Situation	Mean Difficulty (1-10)	Rank (most - least)
Q20	Pedestrian crossings with painted white or yellow lines (zebra crossings)	6.0	10
Q22	Crossings with a refuge in the middle of the road	5.8	11

These results show that the highest difficulty ratings relate to unclear or inconsistent design features, such as flush crossings, misaligned kerb ramps, and inaudible signals. In contrast, more traditional, well-defined crossings such as zebra crossings or signalised intersections were rated as less difficult, though still challenging for many respondents.

Common themes included loss of tactile and auditory information, inconsistent ramp alignment, driver behaviour, and noise interference. Quantitative scores and qualitative comments converge on the principle that safe crossings require **clear physical boundaries, predictable signal timing, and reliable auditory feedback.** The absence of tactile definition and short signal durations all contributed to anxiety and disorientation.

Respondents described challenges with poor alignment of kerb ramps, inadequate audible signals, and the unpredictability of drivers and other road users. Many participants explained that crossings were **“biased towards traffic and give insufficient time to cross”.**

Several respondents noted that **“crossings at lights can be confusing when the kerbs don’t align”,** while others found it disorienting when **“the crossing is completely level with the road”.** These issues often forced people to guess where the safe zone began or ended.

Environmental conditions further increased the difficulty of crossing. People described problems with **“poor lighting, loud background noise, and hybrid cars that are too quiet”**.

Several explained how they relied heavily on sound cues to judge safety, but that traffic noise, construction, or weather made this unreliable. One respondent wrote, **“I find it more difficult to cross without audible signals…I have to stand for ages to work out the traffic flow”.**

Another said that **“E-vehicles and bikes are part of the issue - they’re so silent that I can’t hear them until they’re right beside me”**.

For many, the challenge was not only technical but emotional - crossings created feelings of stress, vulnerability, and dependency. A participant described that **“road crossings are overwhelming when these situations apply”**, while another emphasised **“how tired I am affects how difficult it is to cross”.**

5.5 Public transport: Results and analysis.

Question 34 - Modes of transport used in your local area.

Buses.

- Most participants said buses were convenient but unpredictable, particularly regarding driver behaviour and stop alignment. Comments such as **“The driver doesn’t pull close enough to the kerb”** and **“It’s hard to know when to signal the driver”** were common.
- Respondents also noted that identifying the correct bus was challenging when stop announcements or digital displays were inaudible: **“I can’t read the numbers, and the driver doesn’t always call them out”**. Several participants described anxiety about whether a bus would stop for them, explaining that they sometimes avoided travel altogether.
- Overall, the data suggest that while bus networks are widely used, inconsistencies in communication and boarding design severely limit accessibility.

Trains.

- Participants valued the presence of **audible platform announcements but said reliability varied greatly. Some stations provided clear, consistent guidance, while others had “garbled or silent announcements that leave you guessing”.** Several respondents said they rely on the **“whoosh of the train”** to know when it is arriving.
- Steep platform gaps and inconsistent boarding heights were frequent complaints: **“Sometimes I can step straight on, sometimes it’s a jump”.** This unpredictability created anxiety, particularly during peak hours. Positive experiences were linked to staff assistance - **“When station staff help, it makes all the difference”** - illustrating that human support compensates for inaccessible infrastructure.

Taxis and Rideshare Services.

- Common issues included **“drivers not knowing how to guide someone with low vision” and “refusing guide dogs”.** Several reported feeling anxious about entering the wrong vehicle: **“I can’t read the number plate, so I rely on the driver calling out my name”.**
- Rideshare apps were helpful for some users who could access screen readers, but confusing for others: **“The app isn’t fully accessible, and the driver often cancels when they realise I have a guide dog”.** Overall, respondents supported stronger driver training and enforcement of guide dog access laws to improve confidence and equity of service.

Community Transport.

Comments reflected appreciation for personal support: **“They help me from the door and check that I’m settled”.** However, availability was limited and booking systems were often cumbersome. Respondents highlighted that **“you need to plan days ahead”** and **“sometimes they don’t run at convenient times”.** Despite these constraints, community transport was perceived as the most trusted option for independence, especially in regional areas where mainstream services are infrequent.

Summary of Findings.

Most respondents used public transport regularly, especially buses and trains, yet many faced accessibility issues that reduced their sense of safety and independence.

Participants described ongoing challenges with locating stops, interacting with drivers, and boarding safely - especially where infrastructure lacked tactile or visual clarity. Public transport was viewed as both **essential and unreliable**.

A recurring issue in participant comments was the difficulty locating stops and understanding layouts. Respondents described confusion about **“where to wait” and “how to find the right bus bay when there are multiple platforms and inconsistent audio announcements”.** Others noted that **“drivers don’t always stop close enough to the kerb”,** making boarding difficult for cane users and those with dogs.

Qualitative feedback reveals recurring themes:

- **Communication barriers**—unclear announcements, inaccessible digital signage, and limited driver communication.
- **Physical access gaps**—misaligned bus stops, variable platform heights, and unpredictable kerb proximity.
- **Behavioural barriers**—driver refusal of guide dogs and lack of training on assisting passengers with vision impairment.
- **Limited alternatives**—community transport is highly valued but insufficiently available.

The findings demonstrate that accessibility in transport extends beyond vehicle design to encompass **information systems, staff awareness, and predictability**. Consistent implementation of audible information, physical alignment at boarding points, and mandatory driver training would substantially increase safety, confidence, and independence for people who are blind or have low vision.

> “I’ve been run over by e-bikes—that killed my confidence.”
>
> “Scooters and bikes come from nowhere; I freeze and don’t know where to move.”
>
> “Shared paths are dangerous when cyclists assume they have right of way.”

5.6 Emerging urban design: Results and analysis.

Question 35 - Floating bus stops.

Respondents expressed substantial discomfort with the concept of floating bus stops. The majority rated them as **“not very safe”** or **“not safe at all”.** Key concerns centred on the need to **cross an active bike lane** to reach the bus boarding area. This design was perceived as unsafe for people with low vision or guide dog users who rely on auditory and tactile cues.

> “Cyclists may not check to see if you’re crossing and run you over.”
>
> “I wouldn’t feel safe using these bus stops - the noise of the idling bus masks the sound of bikes.”
>
> “I would not be sure where to stand or when to cross - the whole layout is confusing.”

The combination of **noise, moving traffic, and unfamiliar layouts** led to feelings of disorientation and vulnerability. Some participants reported they would avoid such stops entirely unless tactile and auditory controls were improved.

A minority of respondents (about 3%) felt safe, typically those with well-trained guide dogs or those familiar with similar designs. However, these responses were exceptions. The consensus was that floating bus stops **undermine accessibility and confidence in using public transport independently**.

Question 36 - Shared footpaths.

Respondents strongly opposed shared footpaths, citing frequent collisions, near-misses, and ongoing anxiety when using them. Many described these as one of the most unsafe and unpredictable environments in their community mobility.

Key issues included:

- Speed and unpredictability of e-bikes and e-scooters.
- Lack of auditory warning before cyclists passed.
- Inconsistent separation or signage between walking and riding zones.

These experiences generated long-term anxiety and avoidance of shared paths, forcing many respondents to alter routes or reduce independent travel. Respondents recommended physical segregation, clearer tactile boundaries, and stronger enforcement of riding behaviour

Question 37 - E-scooters and e-bikes.

> "E-scooters are silent until they're right beside you—it's terrifying."
>
> "They zoom past without warning. You never know which side they'll come from."
>
> "I've stopped walking alone in the city because of them."
>
> "Even guide dogs get startled—they don't expect something moving that fast and quiet."

Respondents expressed overwhelming concern about the speed, silence, and unpredictability of e-scooters and e-bikes. Many described them as one of the greatest new hazards to pedestrians with vision impairment. Several respondents reported collisions or near-misses, saying they now avoid areas where these devices are common.

Participants noted that the lack of consistent rules made conditions worse. Some councils ban scooters on footpaths; others allow them. Respondents described confusion and frustration at the absence of enforcement or clear signage. A few supported shared paths only where scooters were limited to very low speeds and audible warning devices were mandatory.

Overall, the data show that e-mobility devices introduce a new layer of environmental unpredictability for people who are blind or have low vision. Their speed and silence undermine the auditory and spatial awareness that pedestrians depend on for safe navigation.

Question 38 – Footpaths level with the street (no kerb edge).

Respondents said they felt unsafe because they could not distinguish when they had stepped onto the road. Comments such as **“I could be in the middle of the road and have no idea”** were common. Participants requested clear tactile boundaries and contrasting surfaces to restore spatial awareness.

Question 39 – Flush intersections or continuous footpaths.

Respondents generally had low confidence with flush intersections and continuous footpaths. Although some appreciated the pedestrian priority intended by these designs, most found them dangerous and counter-intuitive: **“Even if cars are meant to stop, they don’t”.** Participants noted confusion about boundaries and a lack of trust in drivers to yield. One stated, **“I might accidentally move onto the road and into traffic”.** These crossings are thematically linked with Questions 21 and 30 as high-risk environments.

People described flush designs as removing essential tactile and visual cues. Participants noted that **“It’s extremely dangerous because there’s no tactile bar between the footpath and the road”** and these designs **“take away your ability to know where you are” and “make it easy to stray into traffic”**. Low lighting and lack of contrast intensified this danger: **“At night, it’s almost impossible to tell where the path ends”**.

Question 40 – Raised crossings (Mid-block Wombat Crossings).

Participants generally felt safer because **“cars must slow down to mount the platform”**. Comments included **“You can hear cars bumping over the hump so you know it’s there”.** However, respondents warned against false security: **“If there’s no tactile marker, it’s just a bump in the path”.** Overall, raised crossings were viewed as an improvement when paired with clear tactile and auditory cues.

Summary of findings.

Table 6 Emerging urban design ratings

Question	Situation	Mean Safety (1-10)	Rank (safest - least safe)
Q40	Raised crossings (mid-block or wombat crossings)	2.3	1
Q35	Floating bus stops (separated from footpath by bike lane or road)	3.1	2
Q37	E-scooters and e-bikes on footpaths	2.9	3
Q38	Footpaths level with the street (no kerb edge)	2.9	4
Q39	Flush intersections or continuous footpaths	2.8	5
Q36	Shared footpaths (used by pedestrians, bikes, and scooters)	2.9	6

This table summarises the relative perceived safety ratings for emerging urban design captured in the survey. Lower mean safety scores indicate higher perceived risk. Raised crossings were rated as the safest, mainly due to reduced vehicle speed and physical elevation cues, while flush or continuous intersections, shared footpaths, and areas with e-scooters or e-bikes were rated as least safe. Participants emphasised that designs eliminating tactile boundaries or introducing mixed movement flows significantly decrease perceived safety.

These findings highlight a gap between aesthetic urban design and functional accessibility. To be truly inclusive, design innovations must prioritise tactile definition, clear boundaries, and predictable cues.

Participants also commented on shared footpaths used by both pedestrians and riders.

Many had been **“nearly hit by e-bikes”** or **“run over by scooters”**, describing these as major causes of anxiety and avoidance.

For people who are blind or have low vision, the combination of moving bicycles, unclear layouts, and background noise created extreme uncertainty.

The survey revealed that many participants were deeply concerned about the direction of contemporary urban design, particularly where new approaches such as shared zones, continuous footpaths, flush intersections and floating bus stops were being implemented.

Collectively, the evidence from both the survey points to a need for balance between innovation and accessibility. Emerging urban design must avoid prioritising aesthetic minimalism or traffic flow efficiency at the expense of clarity and inclusion. Design features such as defined kerbs, aligned tactile cues, consistent surface textures, and controlled separation between vehicles and pedestrians remain essential for enabling independence.

5.7 Councils: Results and analysis.

Question 41 – Accessing information from Council.

> "I can never find out when or where footpath repairs are happening."
>
> "The website is full of PDFs that aren't screen-reader friendly."
>
> "I don't know who to call; the information changes every time."

Respondents consistently reported that obtaining information from councils about accessibility or infrastructure upgrades was **time-consuming, confusing, and inconsistent** across local government areas. The rating was 6.4 out of 10, making difficulty moderately to high. Many described council websites as **"not accessible"** or **"difficult to navigate"** with key information about works programs or planned upgrades buried under unrelated pages.

Participants said that even when information was available, it was often **inaccessible in format** (e.g., untagged PDFs, small text, or graphics without descriptions). Several respondents noted that councils failed to provide updates in alternative formats, leaving people reliant on **word-of-mouth or local advocacy groups** for news about accessibility improvements.

Respondents wanted **proactive communication**, such as plain-language email updates, accessible newsletters, and text notifications for roadworks or infrastructure disruptions. Some councils were praised for publishing regular updates, but these were described as exceptions rather than the norm.

The results demonstrate that **digital and communication accessibility remains a major barrier** to participation in local governance and awareness of upcoming projects.

Question 42 – Responsiveness to Accessibility Complaints or Requests.

> "You report something and it disappears into a black hole."
>
> "They don't respond unless you complain multiple times."
>
> "There's no way to check if your issue was even logged."

This question drew 242 responses and averaged **2.5 out of 4 for responsiveness.** Participants felt that reporting channels were unclear or ineffective: **“You lodge a complaint and never hear back”.** Others mentioned online forms that were **inaccessible or difficult to locate.** Several respondents said council staff lacked understanding of vision-related barriers, resulting in generic replies or misdirected action. The tone of comments at times suggested frustration and resignation - many had **“stopped reporting because nothing changes”.**

When asked about their experiences with local government, many participants described persistent communication and accessibility barriers. Only about a third said they could obtain information in their preferred format. Comments revealed a lack of understanding among councils about accessible communication.

Overall, councils were generally viewed as **administratively distant** from the lived experience of accessibility problems.

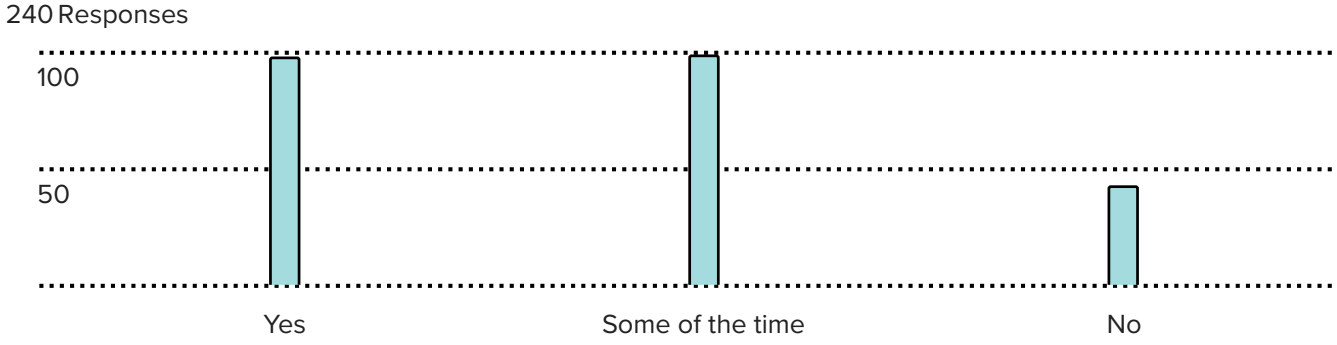
Councils that maintained clear points of contact, accessible formats, and follow-up communication were rated much more positively.

The overall pattern shows that accessibility is not only a design issue but also a governance issue - reliant on effective communication, responsiveness, and inclusion in decision-making processes.

5.8 Self-advocacy.

Most respondents indicated they feel **somewhat confident** or **confident** in advocating for themselves within their communities. However, many reported that their confidence fluctuated depending on the issue, context, or audience. This information is shown as a graph in Figure 17, 100 responded yes, 100 responded some of the time and 40 responded no.

Figure 17 Confidence to self-advocate



Respondents described a strong sense of determination, experience, and resilience built from necessity - yet this was tempered by fatigue, uncertainty about who to contact, and perceived barriers in communication. Confidence was often linked to prior advocacy experience, professional background, or engagement with disability organisations.

A recurring theme was the idea that **self-advocacy is learned through necessity** - a survival skill for navigating inaccessible systems.

Self-advocacy is both a **measure of personal resilience and a reflection of systemic accessibility**. The mixed confidence levels underline the importance of **community education, clear complaint pathways**, and **support from advocacy organisations** such as Guide Dogs NSW/ACT to strengthen confidence and reduce the personal burden of continual self-representation.

Overall, the feedback reveals frustration with systemic inaction and a strong call for clearer processes, accessibility standards, and genuine responsiveness.

Improving digital accessibility, providing feedback to complainants, and ensuring uniform reporting systems across jurisdictions would significantly enhance trust and participation.

5.9 Survey summary analysis.

The stakeholder survey captured the lived experiences of more than 300 participants across New South Wales and the ACT, most of whom were people who are blind or have low vision. The combined quantitative and qualitative results provide a comprehensive picture of how community design, maintenance, and governance influence mobility, safety, and social participation.

Overall Patterns.

Across all domains, mean difficulty scores were consistently high, most ranging from **6.5 to 8 out of 10**, while safety ratings rarely exceeded **3 out of 4**. These data confirm that respondents encounter **persistent barriers** to independent travel. The strongest predictors of safety and confidence were **clarity, predictability, and maintenance**: when tactile or design cues, audible signals, and consistent surfaces were present, participants reported markedly higher confidence and independence.

Footpaths.

Footpaths emerged as the **most common and visible source of difficulty**. High difficulty ratings for uneven surfaces, missing paths, overgrown vegetation, and obstructive street furniture reflect an environment that is unpredictable and often unsafe. Participants emphasised that poor maintenance forces constant vigilance and undermines confidence, making even short trips mentally exhausting.

Crossing the Road.

Crossings were identified as **the most stressful element** of travel. Problems such as misaligned ramps, inaudible signals, and flush designs without kerb definition were repeatedly described as dangerous. Participants said these features remove the cues they rely on to judge safety. Confidence improved only where crossings provided clear tactile and audible information and predictable signal timing.

Public Transport.

Public transport was viewed as **essential but inconsistent**. Bus and train users valued accessible services yet reported barriers to boarding, poor alignment with kerbs, and inaudible announcements. Floating bus stops and shared approaches with cyclists generated significant anxiety. Conversely, community transport, though limited, was praised for its personal assistance and reliability.

Emerging Urban Design.

Respondents were sceptical of newer design trends such as shared zones, continuous footpaths, and flush intersections. These designs were seen as prioritising aesthetics and traffic flow over accessibility, removing the tactile and visual contrasts that signal safe movement. Participants stressed that innovation must not come at the cost of sensory clarity or predictable boundaries.

Councils and Governance.

Local councils were viewed as **key agents for accessibility**, but participants reported wide variability in performance. Common concerns included inaccessible websites, limited follow-up on complaints, and inconsistent application of access standards across jurisdictions. Respondents called for better communication, transparent reporting, and ongoing collaboration with people who have lived experience.

Self-Advocacy.

Most respondents indicated moderate to high confidence in self-advocacy, but many also described fatigue from repeatedly raising issues without visible outcomes. The data show that advocacy skills are strong, but systemic responsiveness remains weak. Participants emphasised that inclusion should be built into systems—not dependent on individuals continually advocating for basic access.

Integrated Themes.

The survey results reveal a recurring pattern across all topics: accessible design, reliable **maintenance, and responsive governance are inseparable**. Physical barriers (uneven paving, misaligned ramps) are compounded by communication failures (inaudible signals, inaccessible information). Emotional strain and avoidance behaviours arise where predictability is lost. Together, these factors limit independence and social participation.

Summary Insight.

Participants consistently defined an accessible community as one that is safe, predictable**, and respectful of diverse ways of navigating space**. The evidence highlights that accessibility depends as much on **governance and culture** as on infrastructure. When design clarity, consistent maintenance, and genuine co-design are present, confidence and participation rise dramatically. The findings underscore that meaningful inclusion requires a sustained, cross-sector commitment to ensuring that every element of the built environment communicates safety and belonging.

6. Recommendations with commentary.

Recommendation 1: Embed co-design and consult with people with lived experience in planning, implementation and governance processes.

- Participants consistently reported that consultation often occurs too late—after plans are finalised—resulting in token engagement. Genuine co-design, where people with disability contribute to concept development, leads to better usability and community trust. Early involvement identifies barriers that technical design reviews might overlook.
- Structured partnerships with disability organisations such as Guide Dogs NSW/ACT and lived-experience panels create a feedback loop that continuously improves policy and design. This approach aligns with best-practice governance by treating community expertise as an integral part of planning rather than an external critique.

Recommendation 2: Prioritise consistent maintenance and enforcement of footpath, lighting, and vegetation standards.

- Regular inspection and prompt repair of footpaths, kerb ramps, lighting, and vegetation are fundamental to ensuring continuous, safe mobility. Survey respondents identified poor surface quality, overgrown plants, and obstructive street furniture as the most persistent daily hazards, often ranking them higher than structural design issues. Consistent maintenance provides the predictability that people who are blind or have low vision depend on for confidence and independence.
- An enforcement framework—covering parking obstructions, construction debris, and compliance with access standards—ensures that maintenance responsibilities are shared between councils, utilities, and property owners. Transparent response targets and public reporting would strengthen accountability and demonstrate that accessibility is treated as an essential service, not a discretionary upgrade.

Recommendation 3: Strengthen inclusive design by embedding design, tactile and auditory cues in all new areas and upgrades.

- Embedding design (architectural and landscape), tactile, auditory, and visual contrast cues in every stage of design prevents costly retrofits and supports universal usability. Participants repeatedly highlighted that accessible design is not about adding features for a minority but about creating clarity for everyone—parents with prams, older adults, and people with mobility aids as well as those with vision impairment.
- Applying inclusive design early in planning processes ensures that accessibility is systematic rather than incidental. By standardising cues such as detectable warning surfaces, consistent kerb gradients, and luminance contrast, planners can deliver environments that are intuitive to navigate and reduce the need for ongoing individual advocacy.

Recommendation 4: Improve transport accessibility, ensuring accessible paths of travel, audible announcements, and trained staff.

- Accessible public transport and ensuring that people can confidently get to and from transport expands employment, education, and social participation opportunities. The survey showed that although buses and trains are widely used, inconsistent boarding alignment, inaudible announcements, and driver inattention reduce safety and confidence. Aligning stop design with universal access standards and ensuring predictable boarding points are relatively low-cost measures with high impact.
- Comprehensive driver and station-staff training on communicating with passengers who are blind or have low vision is equally critical. Consistent audio announcements, tactile platform markings, and separation from micro-mobility traffic transform public transport from a stress point into a dependable mobility option.

Recommendation 5: Review emerging urban design practices to ensure safety and tactile definition.

- Design trends such as shared zones, flush intersections, and continuous footpaths have introduced aesthetic cohesion but reduced tactile and spatial definition. Respondents expressed anxiety and avoidance behaviour in these settings, emphasising that minimalism and accessibility are often in tension.
- Re-evaluation does not imply halting innovation; rather, it requires rigorous testing with people who have lived experience before implementation. Urban design should integrate sensory feedback mechanisms - contrasting textures and landscaping, audible signals, and clear kerb demarcations - to ensure safety and inclusion remain central to modern streetscapes.

Recommendation 6: Enhance council communication systems, with accessible processes, formats and transparent feedback loops.

- Respondents described difficulty accessing council information and a lack of follow-up after lodging complaints or feedback. These barriers discourage civic participation and perpetuate mistrust. Implementing accessible web interfaces, multi-channel reporting (phone, email, SMS), and automatic confirmation messages would substantially increase confidence.
- Transparent tracking of issues and public reporting on resolution times make councils accountable while also providing valuable data for planning. Effective communication systems shift accessibility from reactive responses to proactive management, reinforcing councils' role as facilitators of inclusion.

Recommendation 7: Promote public awareness of pedestrian safety and shared responsibility for accessibility.

- Even well-designed infrastructure can be undermined by unsafe public behaviour—cyclists speeding on shared paths, vehicles blocking footpaths, or residents neglecting vegetation trimming. Education campaigns that humanise accessibility - showing how everyday actions affect safety - help shift attitudes from compliance to empathy.

- Awareness initiatives encourage collective responsibility for accessible spaces. Reinforcing pedestrian priority, guide dog rights, and e-scooter etiquette through signage, media, and community partnerships builds cultural understanding and complements physical accessibility measures.

Recommendation 8: Monitor and evaluate accessibility and inclusion outcomes in partnership with people with disability.

- Establishing a strong evidence base and ongoing evaluation framework enables organisations to assess whether they are on track to achieving their accessibility commitments and to identify where further improvement is needed. Respondents emphasised that while accessibility progress is frequently reported, it is rarely supported by measurable outcomes or independent review. Developing clear indicators in partnership with people with disability provides objective benchmarks for councils and agencies to monitor genuine change over time.
- Regular evaluation supports **data-driven decision-making, targeted investment, and continuous improvement.** Publicly reporting results fosters transparency and accountability, demonstrating that accessibility is not a static goal but a sustained organisational performance standard. Embedding evaluation within existing governance and community reporting processes ensures that accessibility remains central to planning, delivery, and review—not a one-off project achievement.

Appendix A – Legislation and Policy.

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA).

This act has an ongoing influence and remains central to legal protections.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

In 2008, Australia ratified the CRPD, a landmark treaty that reflects the **social and human rights models** of disability. This treaty helped to redefine disability policy for all levels of government, contributing to reform across legal, policy, and service delivery systems.

National Disability Strategy.

The first national disability strategy (2010–2020) was explicitly informed by the CRPD. It marked a significant shift away from welfare or medical approaches, promoting inclusion, participation, and equality. The current strategy is Australia's Disability Strategy 2021 – 2031.

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) – Launched 2013, Rolled Out 2016–2020.

Grounded in individualised funding, the NDIS, which was implemented from 2016, embodies social model principles such as:

- Choice and control for participants,
- Focus on removing environmental and systemic barriers, and
- Inclusion in education, employment, and community life.

Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2010.

These Standards set out minimum requirements for infrastructure, vehicles, signage, information, and staff training to eliminate discrimination and promote inclusive mobility.

Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010.

The Premises Standards specify national Performance Requirements that provide for equitable and dignified access to new buildings and those areas of existing buildings hat undergo renovation or upgrade that requires a building approval (from Council).

The National Construction Code of Australia (NCC) applies to new buildings and buildings undergoing significant refurbishment or alteration. Sections of the NCC require compliance with a range of access provisions and generally aligns with the Premises Standards.

The Australian Standard (AS1428) – Design for Access and Mobility - specifies the design requirements for new building work, as required by the NCC and Premises Standards to provide access for people with disabilities.

Universal design.

While the Premises and Transport standards provide minimum design features, many organisations and governments complement legislative obligations with the broader universal design, which seeks to design products, environments, systems and services so they are usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design. It seeks accessibility and inclusion for everyone, regardless of age, ability, or background.

NSW and ACT Inclusion Acts.

The Disability Inclusion Act 2014 (NSW) commits the NSW Government to making communities more inclusive and accessible for people with disability now and into the future. It regulates specialist disability supports and services to people with disability in NSW. It requires local governments to develop Disability Inclusion Action Plans and review them every four years.

The Disability Inclusion Act 2023 (ACT) requires territory authorities (which includes local government functions) to prepare a Disability and Inclusion Plan (DIP).

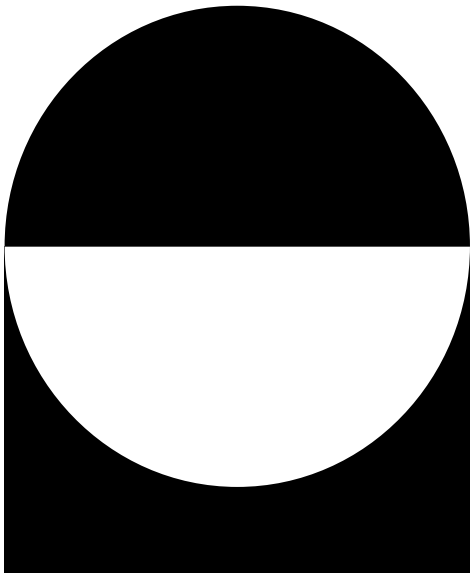
Disability Royal Commission.

The Disability Royal Commission (2019–2023) reinforced the importance of viewing disability through a rights-based and social model lens and highlighted the need to dismantle structural discrimination, abuse, and exclusion.

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) international standard.

This Guideline was first developed in 2008, with its most recent update in 2025.

It provides the technical standards that help make the digital world accessible to people with disability. Although not legislated, they are often applied by governments, businesses and organisations as a benchmark when designing and implementing digital aspects of their operations.



Appendix B - Survey.

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT Survey - ‘Creating Pathways to Inclusion’.

Information and consent page

Q1.

Information and Consent

People who are blind or have low vision, and people with other disability, are invited to take part in a survey about issues and barriers they may encounter as they move around their communities. The survey is a part of research being conducted by the University of Technology Sydney on behalf of Guide Dogs NSW/ACT.

The survey will take approximately **20-25 minutes** to complete, and completion of this survey is entirely voluntary. All questions (except for the three screening questions) are optional, but we encourage you to complete all questions to support our research.

Your responses will remain anonymous, confidential and private. Information collected from you and other participants will only be used for the purpose of this research project.

This research, including the survey is sponsored by Guide Dogs NSW/ACT. The University of Technology Sydney (UTS) has been commissioned to conduct this survey.

For more information about this survey and research, please refer to the Participant Information Sheet.

In giving my consent to participate in the following survey I confirm that:

- I have read and understood the Participant Information Statement
- I understand the purpose of the study, and what I will be asked
- I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and my responses are anonymous and confidential.

If you agree with the above, please check the “I Agree” box below.

○ I Agree

About you (screening)

Q2. **I am** (You need to be 18 years or older to participate in this survey)

- ○ 18 - 34 years old
- ○ 35 - 49 years old
- ○ 50 - 64 years old
- ○ 65 years old to 84 years old
- ○ 85 years old or older
- ○ Prefer not to answer

Q3. **What is your level of vision?** (Choose one.)

- ○ I am blind with no functional vision
- ○ I have low vision with some functional vision
- ○ I have no vision loss

Q4. **Do you have any other disability?** (You can choose more than one.)

- ☐ Intellectual disability
- ☐ Autism Spectrum Disorder
- ☐ Psychosocial Disability (mental health conditions)
- ☐ Cerebral Palsy
- ☐ Deaf or hard of hearing
- ☐ Physical disability
- ☐ I have a chronic health condition
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ I do not have any other disability

Q4.

This survey is targeted only towards individuals who have vision loss or another disability.

We thank you for your interest in the survey.

Navigating your community

Section 1.

Navigating Your Community

Q1. **How confident do you feel getting around your local community?**

Rate your level of confidence from 1 (not confident) to 10 (very confident) on the scale below.

Not confident Very confident

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Q2. **How do you feel about getting around your local community compared to two years ago?**

- More confident
- Less confident
- My confidence has remained about the same

Q2 comment. Share why you have rated your confidence level this way in the comment box below.

Q3. **How do you feel about getting around places that are unfamiliar compared to two years ago?**

- More confident
- Less confident
- My confidence has remained about the same

Q3 comment. Share why you have rated your confidence level this way in the comment box below.

Q4. **If you are blind or have low vision, what supports help you to get around the community?** (Select all that apply.)

- [ ] Mobility aid – Long white cane
- [ ] Mobility aid – ID Identification or Symbol cane
- [ ] Mobility Aid – Support cane
- [ ] Mobility aid – Guide dog
- [ ] Informal supports e.g. Family or friends
- [ ] Formal paid supports, e.g. Support Worker or Aged Care Worker
- [ ] Navigation technology e.g. GPS
- [ ] Remote assistance e.g. Be My Eyes, Aira
- [ ] None of the above

Q5. **Do you use any of these other supports to get around your community?** (Select all that apply.)

- [ ] Assistance animal
- [ ] Manual wheelchair
- [ ] Electric wheelchair
- [ ] Mobility scooter
- [ ] Walker
- [ ] None of the above

Q6. **Do you use more supports when you travel to unfamiliar or infrequently visited places?**

- ○ Yes - Share what supports and why you use more supports in the comment box below.

- ○ No

Q7. **Are you able to access the information you need to plan your journey?**

- ○ Yes – Most of the time
- ○ Yes – Some of the time
- ○ No

Q7 comment. Share any challenges you have with accessing information about your journey.

Footpaths

Section 2 .

Footpaths

How easy or difficult do you find the following situations when using a footpath? (Rate the difficulty from 1 to 10, with 10 being the most difficult.)

Q8. **No footpath**

Not difficult Very difficult
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Q9. **Footpath only on one side of the road**

Not difficult Very difficult
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Q10. **Uneven surfaces, for example tree roots, sunken paving, poor maintenance**

Not difficult Very difficult
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Q11. **Low hanging branches or overgrown plants**

Not difficult Very difficult
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Q12. **Electricity boxes or utility pillars blocking the path**

Not difficult Very difficult
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Q13. **Bollards on the footpath**

Not difficult Very difficult

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Q14. **Obstructions like street furniture, shop signs, or bins**

Not difficult Very difficult

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Q15. **Cars parked on the footpath or across driveways**

Not difficult Very difficult

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Q16. **Temporary barriers or Council works**

Not difficult Very difficult

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Q17. **Poor or inconsistent lighting**

Not difficult Very difficult

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Q18a. **Use the comment box below to describe any other situation you find difficult when using a footpath.**

Q18b. Rate the difficulty of the situation you described from 1 to 10, with 10 being the most difficult.

Not difficult Very difficult

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Crossing the road

Section 3 .

Crossing the Road

How easy or difficult do you find the following road crossing designs on a road with a steady traffic flow? (Rate these 1 to 10, with 10 being the most difficult.)

Q19. **Signalised crossings where the kerb ramp aligns with the ramp on the opposite side**

Not difficult Very difficult
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Q20. **Pedestrian crossings with painted white or yellow lines (zebra crossings)**

Not difficult Very difficult
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Q21. **Raised thresholds that continue the footpath level across the road, without a kerb ramp that indicates the kerb edge**

Not difficult Very difficult
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Q22. **Crossings with a refuge in the middle of the road**

Not difficult Very difficult
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Q23 . Share any further thoughts you have on road crossing designs in the comment box below.

Road Crossings . **What makes a road crossing difficult to use?** (Rate the following situations from 1 to 10, with 10 being the most difficult.)

Q24. **Ramp is too steep**

Not difficult Very difficult
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Q25. **Ramp or road crossing is too wide, making it hard to orient yourself or is too far away from the ATS/lights**

Not difficult Very difficult
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Q26. **Poor transition between ramp and footpath or road**

Not difficult Very difficult
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Q27. **No ramp on the opposite side of the road**

Not difficult Very difficult
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Q28. **Misaligned – into intersection and/or not aligned to the opposite kerb ramp**

Not difficult Very difficult
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Q29. **Unexpected obstacles at the crossing, for example, poles, bins, signs and bollards**

Not difficult Very difficult
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Q30. **Unable to identify the road crossing point because it is flush with the road**

Not difficult Very difficult
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Q31. **Inaudible audio signal at ATS/lights**

Not difficult Very difficult
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Q32a. **Use the comment box below to describe any other situation that makes a road crossing difficult to use.**

Q32b. Rate the difficulty of the situation you described from 1 to 10, with 10 being the most difficult.

Not difficult Very difficult

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Q33 . Share any further thoughts you have on what makes road crossings difficult to use in the comment box below.

Public Transport

Section 4 .

Public Transport

Q34. **Over the past two years, what modes of transport have you used in your local area?** (Tick the ones that apply.)

- [ ] Train
- [ ] Metro
- [ ] Light rail
- [ ] Bus
- [ ] Taxi
- [ ] Ride share
- [ ] Community transport
- [ ] None of the above

Emerging Urban design

Section 5 .

Emerging Urban Design

Q35. **Floating bus stops** are where the bus stop is separated from the footpath by a bike lane or road.

How safe would you feel using a floating bus stop like this?

- ○ Safe
- ○ Somewhat safe
- ○ Not very safe
- ○ Not safe at all

Q35 comment. Share why you feel this way in the comment box below.

Q36. **Shared footpaths** may be used by pedestrians, bikes and scooters. Some footpaths don't have a barrier or separation between people walking and people riding bikes or scooters.

How safe do you feel using a shared footpath like this?

- ○ Very safe
- ○ Somewhat safe
- ○ Not very safe
- ○ Not safe at all

Q36 comment. Share why you feel this way in the comment box below.

Q37. **In the last two years, have you had any problems with e-scooters or e-bikes?** (You can choose more than one.)

- [ ] I was hit by an e-scooter or e-bike
- [ ] I was nearly hit by an e-scooter or e-bike
- [ ] I tripped or nearly tripped over an e-scooter or e-bike parked or left in my path of travel
- [ ] I feel less confident going out because of e-scooters or e-bikes
- [ ] No – I haven't had any problems with them

Q38. **Footpaths level with the street.** Some footpaths are built at the same level as the street, without a kerb or step down on your left or right to indicate you have moved onto the road.

How safe do you feel using a footpath like this?

- ○ Safe
- ○ Somewhat safe
- ○ Not very safe
- ○ Not safe at all

Q38 comment. Share why you feel this way in the comment box below.

Q39. **Flush intersections/Continuous footpaths.** A flush intersection/ continuous footpath is where the road and footpath are all at the same level, with no kerb ramp to indicate you are about to step onto the road. Pedestrians have priority to cross. They are located at corners of streets.

How safe do you feel crossing the road at a flush intersection like this?

- ◯ Very safe
- ◯ Somewhat safe
- ◯ Not very safe
- ◯ Not safe at all

Q39 comment. Share why you feel this way in the comment box below.

Q40. **Raised crossings.** A raised crossing is where the footpath and road are at the same level and people have priority to cross. It has a raised platform (flat top road hump) spanning across the entire width of the crossing to bring the road to the same level as the adjacent pedestrian footpaths. Cars drive up, slow down, then drive over and down the raised platform. They are often placed mid-block on a street.

How safe do you feel when using a raised crossing like this?

- ◯ Safe
- ◯ Somewhat safe
- ◯ Not very safe
- ◯ Not safe at all

Q40 comment. Share why you feel this way in the comment box below.

Local Government

Section 6 .

Local Government

Local Government refers to Councils in NSW, and the Territory Government in the ACT.

Q41. **Can you get the information you need from your local government in your preferred format?**

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ Sometimes
- ◯ No

Q41 comment. Share any challenges you have with getting information you need from your local government.

Q42. **Have you ever raised an issue or made a suggestion or complaint to local government about footpaths or road crossings?**

- ◯ Yes – I have and it was easy
- ◯ Yes – I have – but it was not easy
- ◯ No – I haven't because I didn't know how
- ◯ No – I haven't because the process was not accessible
- ◯ No – I haven't because there hasn't been a need

Q42a. **If you have raised an issue, suggestion or complaint with local government, did they respond?** (Choose one.)

- ◯ Yes – local government let me know they had actioned my issue, suggestion or complaint
- ◯ Yes – local government actioned my issue, suggestion or complaint, but didn't communicate that to me
- ◯ No – local government did not action my issue, suggestion or complaint, but did let me know why
- ◯ Local government never responded to my issue, suggestion or complaint

Q42 comment. Share any further thoughts you have about raising an issue, suggestion or complaint with local government in the comment box below.

Other

Section 7 .

Other

Q43. **Do you feel confident to self-advocate in the community?**

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ Some of the time
- ◯ No

Q43 comment. Share why you rated your confidence this way in the comment box below.

Q44. **Where do you live?** (Choose one.)

- ○ Sydney Metro
- ○ Western Sydney
- ○ Central Coast or Hunter Region
- ○ Illawarra or South Coast
- ○ Southern Highlands or Tablelands
- ○ Central West NSW
- ○ Northern Rivers or North Coast
- ○ Riverina or Murray Region
- ○ ACT
- ○ [ ] Other (please specify):
- ○ Prefer not to say

Q45. **Which of these areas do you visit often (for work, shopping, or social reasons)?** (Tick all that apply.)

- ☐ Sydney Metro
- ☐ Western Sydney
- ☐ Central Coast or Hunter Region
- ☐ Illawarra or South Coast
- ☐ Southern Highlands or Tablelands
- ☐ Central West NSW
- ☐ Northern Rivers or North Coast
- ☐ Riverina or Murray Region
- ☐ ACT
- ☐ [ ] Other (please specify):
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q46. **What would you like advocacy organisations like Guide Dogs NSW/ ACT to advocate for?** (Up to three suggestions.)

Write your suggestions in the comment box below.

Q47. **Would you like to be contacted for follow-up or to tell your story?**

- ○ No
- ○ Yes

Follow Up . To register your interest in being contacted for follow-up, please visit the Follow-Up Form or copy and paste the link below into a new browser tab.

https://utsau.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1Ck2GzgvR7SLC4K

This will take you to a separate, short form where you can provide your contact details and best availability. Please note, the short-form will repeat some of the screening questions included in this survey - this is necessary to protect the anonymity of the responses you have provided to this survey.

Please click the blue 'Next' button below to submit your responses to this survey.

Appendix C – Comments from survey respondents.

Confidence navigating local community.

- Things have changed with e-bikes and Covid dogs. My remote village went rampant with kids on e-bikes and people with poorly trained dogs. Also the ferry wharf is overcrowded with illegal fishing. I rely on the ferry to leave the village for the real world. A lot of pet dogs have lead aggression, a lot of pet dogs roam free in areas where they shouldn't, and people have no concept of letting a GD or AD do his/her work. This actually improves in dense urban environments, where people have to train their dogs to take them out on narrow footpaths or to street cafés.
- The same difficulties still exist.
- I have used a great mix of transport options including: Public transport, Ubers/ taxi, Support workers (new in last 2 years). I feel more independent as a result.
- Overall, I'm a very confident person. I take things as a challenge. Therefore, it takes a lot to dint my confidence and that's why my confidence is a remain the same.
- I have been able to remember the safer/accessible routes to travel to destinations. I have less anxiety when I have to plan alternative routes at short notice.
- Having the Sunflower Hidden disabilities lanyard have given me the confidence that I will get help when I ask for it.
- Lost more vision in the past two years.
- I am aware of my surroundings in my local environment. Thus, I am confident in navigating the area. With that in mind, I have been more confident moving around through the day than at night.
- Over the past two years, I haven't had the opportunity to expand on my orientation and mobility skills much, and I do not feel safe walking alone in the community.
- The question about confidence is too broad to be answered meaningfully. My confidence varies greatly depending on the specific destination, purpose and

circumstances, even within my local community. There are specific locations that I am moderately confident in getting to, but my confidence dramatically drops off if it's a different location even very close by to a familiar one. For instance, I might be moderately confident of getting to a particular shop in a mall but have very little confidence getting to another shop in the same mall.

- In addition, there are environmental changes (e.g. removal of curbs, introduction of light rail) that have negatively affected my confidence, but these occurred over 2 years ago.
- Have moved into girlfriend's place and spend all me time in her area
- Community behaviour.
- I feel that my confidence hasn't changed.
- I've had time and experience to familiarise myself with my local surroundings and explore as well as having orientation and mobility when required.
- I moved from Wollongong to Brisbane and with the support of GDQLD and the retirement of Keira and match with my new guide dog Bonnie I feel more confident.
- I've been living independently for the past 4 years, because of that I've had reason to practice travelling independently as well and this caused a massive boost to my confidence quite quickly after I started living independently.
- I have had a lot of Guide Dog training and I've gained more independence.
- There has been change in the last two years.
- Nothing has changed.
- Dangerous poorly maintained foot paths … … bike & E scooter riders running into me on the foot paths …drivers not stopping at read lights …. people not recognizing my dog as a seeing eye dog even though carries all the provided fluorescent signage.

Confidence navigating unfamiliar areas.

- I have a very well-trained dog, albeit a very young dog still.
- The difficulties still remain the same.
- Technology improvements allow for easier access to information like real time data and accessible signals.

- My short-term memory is better. I have been able to borrow strategies from my low-vision colleagues such as setting alarms on TripView and having a virtual travel buddy, when tired or going to new places, who can check on my progress.
- Have needed assistance for a while.
- I am fairly confident in navigating areas which are unfamiliar to me. Having said that, it's always easier to navigate through the day, than at night (because I have poor night vision).
- Over the past two years my assistive technology skills have increased and I can now use apps like Google Maps and Seeing AI to assist in unfamiliar environments.
- There are environmental changes (e.g. removal of curbs, introduction of light rail) that have negatively affected my confidence, but these occurred over 2 years ago. There are apps that have increased my confidence navigating in unfamiliar places, but these were introduced over 2 years ago. So things feel relatively similar now to what they were in 2023.
- I worry about large crowds of people, not being about to locate my destination.
- The community behaviour change. Because my confidence hasn't changed.
- Unfamiliar environments are unpredictable and overwhelming. Things change, high traffic areas make it difficult to concentrate and problem solve.
- I've had more reason to explore unfamiliar places and have at times not had assistance with guiding and this basically forced me to learn to navigate unfamiliar places independently.
- Since being matched with my Guide Dog, I feel more confident when I'm in unfamiliar environments as I know I have her to keep me safe. I'm also better at advocating for myself if I need any assistance.
- Dangerous poorly maintained foot paths … … bike & E scooter riders running into me on the foot paths … drivers not stopping at read lights …. people not recognizing my dog as a seeing eye dog even though carries all the provided fluorescent signage.
- My vision has deteriorated. Most place do not cater for vision impairment.
- Lot more use of black on oaths and walls in major public areas.
- I still hold onto hope and have a positive (attitude).

Use of supports in unfamiliar places.

- I am not using more supports. It's the same dog doing more than one task. My dog is an Assistance Dog, but cross trained with Guiding skills. I need medical alert and more assistance than just guiding. My dog answers the phone, operates lights, loads/unloads the washing machine, and either transfers the washing into a dryer or assists hanging it out. Shuttles delivered groceries into the kitchen, assists with room/bathroom tidying by collecting clothes into a receptacle, he also assists me in the bathroom and helps me with clothing, shoes and socks. He automatically notices and picks up dropped items. He identifies medication, emergency medication and alerts to respiratory changes due to internal bleeding, and recognizes and manages partial seizures, before they become crippling. He also takes the rubbish and the recycling out.
- Tripview departure and arrival alarms to make sure I'm ready and remember to get on/off public transport at the correct spot.
- Google maps to plan the most energy efficient trips and choose one that does not cause fatigue.
- Saving the chosen route so I can easily ask for help if I get lost or forget where i'm supposed to be going.
- Yes. I always utilise GPS support and sometimes seek help from a friend or family member.
- It is quite common for me to feel burnt out and overwhelmed in busier or unfamiliar places, and I tend to rely more on family and friends sighted guide in those situations to avoid stress and crowds.
- I reserve friend/family assistance for the occasional trip to somewhere unfamiliar or infrequently visited. Navigating to unfamiliar (or infrequently visited) locations can be impossible, near impossible or I lack the confidence to do so safely/reliably/efficiently without assistance. For instance, I might have an idea that I can get near the location, but be unsure whether I will be able to find the entrance without assistance. Making the trip with the uncertainty/risk that if no one is around to help me find the entrance it might be a wasted journey, or I might be waiting for an uncertain length of time for assistance, deters me from trying it. So I usually don't attempt that unless I have family or friends to assist which I usually reserve for only the most infrequent/desperate needs.
- Yes. I will use a taxi to drop me at exact places, study Google maps for the route and landmarks if I am walking or use a support worker

- Yes go with girlfriend's parents
- For unfamiliar places I use my guide dog, support worker or family to assist due to my limited knowledge of my surroundings, and lack of familiarity to landmarks as reference points that could be used to orientate myself.
- Yes- I use my guide dog, GPS and camera as long distance magnification device. Of a night I will use my long cane in tandem with my guide dog.
- I find it useful to have assistance when I mean an unfamiliar environment to help me with being more orientated to my surroundings, making me feel a bit safer. I usually get support workers to take me to places that I don't go often
- Cane if needed and or Support Worker.
- support worker, to assist in finding the destination
- I use support workers due to my disabilities as i use a manual wheelchair with my assistance dog and my support worker pushes the chair but have been able to successfully use an electric power chair with my long mobility cane and assistance dog safely in the community with the aid of my support worker, gently tapping on different parts of my back called haptick feedback back so that i know when to turn left or right, slow down and stop. because i also use hearing aids this method makes life much easier for me and my dog to manage.
- as i can then safely tell him to go left or right or slow up and stop. without the need of my support worker verbally telling me to do so, and if in a noisy environment i may not hear her that well.
- Long cane in unfamiliar areas. Technique more reliable.
- I use more supports because all environments are unfamiliar. Usually I can at access my own home independently. When I'm away I need assistance to orient and sometimes ongoing assistance with accommodation and other environments.
- When travelling to new places. I will get family to help. Train staff. Airport staff.
- Assistance from people - staff or members of the public. Remote video call to friends if needed. GPS technology if disoriented.
- I do not use blind stick around familiar places but do when elsewhere. Also look for other support eg in UK I used the train assistance to find platform and seating.

- In these situations, I rely much more on what remains of my eyesight, making me diffident.
- Yes. Family friends support workers. When you are blind and you haven't had orientation in an area it's a must.

Challenges accessing information to plan a journey.

- Sometimes timetable changes and rail replacement can be a bit confusing. But we usually sort it out or ask for help.
- Sometimes I miss a bus or train that could've have delivered me to my destination because there are too many options or there is a sudden change in stopping patterns and I get confused.
- Some destinations are not clearly routed and may cause me to get off at the wrong sport or walk in the wrong direction especially if the destination is within a building with multiple entries /exits I usually travel with family of friends, never independently
- Inaccuracies with the GPS coordinates. Sometimes the GPS will land me up to 50m away from where I'm aiming to go.
- I struggle to access any information about road works, construction that might be occurring along my path, and having an app or platform that could inform me of any abnormalities in the path would help me to feel less stressed and navigate my journey with ease.
- Information is never detailed enough. Directions for the general population (e.g. Google Maps) doesn't tell me the streets I need to cross but not turn down: e.g. it might say in x metres turn right on to Pitt Street, then in x metres turn right on to Market Street, but it doesn't tell me that I will need to cross over King Street and make my way through a pedestrian mall. They also fail to provide sufficient detail about the entrance, so even if I get to the right building, finding where the door is located and what kind of door it is etc can be near impossible.
- No challenges accessing information.
- Information hard to find at times.
- Not being able to read Google Maps ahead of time.

- I can't access a visual map to figure out how to walk from A to B, or to understand which bus stand I'm meant to go to and which side of the road it is on. Or to see on a map what areas of interests are along my route like a fast-food store or 7/11,, or being able to compare the distance between two points of interests and how they deviate from my planned route.
- I use the Moovit App.
- There have been times where rail replacement bus routes haven't been consistent and are basically impossible to memorise. Occasionally timetables aren't even available for viewing.
- Sometimes maps are not accessible to my screen reader. It's difficult for me to place a pin on the map or even identify a specific pick up or drop off location for example when getting an Uber or a taxi. It's difficult for me to know if there will be suitable grass nearby to toilet my Guide Dog.
- None if there happens to only be steps or moving steps and I can't use and will then need to find a lift.
- Google maps or similar.
- Inaccessible website.
- I have plan trips well ahead.
- Information on websites/apps can be inaccessible when using screen readers.
- Takes a long time to plan. Apps difficult to use.

Difficult situations when using a footpath.

- Off leash dogs on the footpath, lead aggressive dogs not being contained by owner, e-bikes and skateboarding on footpaths.
- The three main obstacles are cars overhanging footpath, signs etc on footpath and outdoor dining on narrow footpaths not designated areas
- Construction sites with inadequate signs.
- Navigating around people or cars on narrow footpaths where I may have to walk on the road to get through.
- Losing my balance if the path is uneven and I have to quickly change direction.
- Estimating the amount of space required to go around obstacles when it's dark.

- Uneven surfaces are especially difficult at night, due to my poor night vision. For the same reason, I can also run into branches at face level.
- When there is a lot of traffic and there is no pedestrian crossing.
- Winding footpaths that do not follow a straight line, or paths where the shoreline disappears and reappears can be disorientating.
- Telstra public telephone boxes are the worst!!! My cane goes under them but my head goes straight into the relatively narrow/sharp edge – ouch!
- Construction site, footpath diversions.
- Muddy puddles forming on footpaths during and after heavy rain.
- I find it difficult when there are bikes or scooters on the footpath. A lot of the time people will come zooming past and come very close to me and my Guide Dog expecting us to move.
- If the footpath is uneven it can make it very unsafe with my wheelchair and uncomfortable with all the constant bumps on the path for my pain in my back.
- Joins in concrete paths cause my cane to jam and jar backwards. It's painful.
- Black cement footpaths at night when lighting doesn't not get reflected back. Bright Lighting doesn't really help.
- Nearby unexpected noises and obstructions like trucks.
- The position of the Sun complicated my vision and some reflective items such as windows or items made of steel can be hazardous.
- People that do not speak and get out of your way.
- Wide footpaths with no consistent building line to follow.
- Gutters can be a trap if they're concrete, like the path or road they are part of. I often fail to recognise depth, so am tentative.
- E bikes and scooters on the footpath. It's very dangerous when you don't know they're coming. And people with Off lead or uncontrolled Dogs. As a Guide Dog handler this is very difficult.

Comments on road crossing designs.

- I have a very well trained dog. I can manage road crossings generally very well. It gets hazardous if e-bikes, dog walkers with lead aggressive dogs or off-leash dogs also cross, especially if they come very close.
- Motorists driving into a pedestrian crossing is also annoying, especially if the traffic isn't moving. But in my village motorists are very considerate.
- Estimating the amount of time required to cross from the refuge to the other side of the road.
- Some roads have the tactiles at the end of a road that has no crossing and this can be confusing.
- I have balance issues if the path continues into a grassy area that has uneven texture/depth.
- I have found that even kerb ramps are very important for my clients. Kerb ramps which don't align with each other are very difficult to navigate.
- I struggle with intersections, because even though I can indent, this comes with an even greater level of unfamiliarity.
- ATS are great when they work. They often don't work. Very few people (including me) take the time to report when they are not working, because the process is unclear and time-consuming, and it's not our job.
- Transport for NSW should have a NFC/proximity chip (not a QR Code which require eyes to see) on the ATS so that one can use the Transport for NSW app to detect the ATS and report it as not working.
- Flat Footpath with no clear marked or coloured distinguish between kerb or road.
- Footpaths that are flat to the road and there's no indication when you walk off the footpath onto the road and if there is a garden in the refuge in the middle of the road.
- Crossing at any crossing where the kerbs do not align.
- I find it difficult when there is no curb ramp or gutter and it is completely level with the road. I also find it difficult when there is no traffic lights and the road is busy particularly at a tea intersection.

- Crossings at lights (that) give insufficient tome to cross and are biased towards the traffic. The longer the crossing eg 6 lanes the more difficult and stressful the cross.
- Mainly the unpredictability in unfamiliar areas.
- Misaligned gutters are really hazardous, as you would like to presume the dip is facing the direction of where it is safe to cross.
- I really need a curb ramp, or clear physical sign that I'm at the edge of a road or crossing. I don't feel as safe without this.
- I find it more difficult to cross without audible signals. I don't always walk in a straight line. I tend to walk to the right so I always go a bit down the road away from the corner of non pedestrian crossing places. if there is no audible lights and the crossing is not familiar to me I have to stand for ages to work out the traffic flow. If a street is known to be small and not busy I have no trouble crossing it. If there is no defined kerbs I have all sorts of problems knowing if I am on the footpath or the road. The centre of the capital city I live in has loads of places where there are no kerbs. I don't like to go into the city for that and lots of other reasons to do with unsocial behaviour of visitors to the city. If I am tired I find it much more difficult to make street crossings whether there are audible signals or not.
- The easiest is where there is a ramp down and a bipping indicator on the other side so I can head for it.
- I find it hard when you can't hear the traffic
- Very difficult to read any signs.
- Now that I'm transitioning from a guide dog to a cane, I am very concerned by crossings where the ramps don't align with each other particularly when the ramps aren't constructed in such a way that I can lineup with them to cross straight.
- There are not many of these around where I live, and I cannot use any of them on my own.

Other situations that make a road crossing difficult to use.

- Motorists driving into it at peak hour traffic (red light cameras for pedestrian crossings in Sydney's CBD!), e-bikes using traffic lights and going very fast. Unruly, growly or off-leash dogs.

- Use of slip lanes.
- Lights at crossing not working.
- Over-crowding at road crossings.
- Crossings where there are no tactiles at the ramp.
- Vehicles (especially busses) being parked across the crossing (i.e. when the vehicle, in anticipation of being able to make the lights, has advanced beyond the actual or notional line they are meant to stay behind but the lights have changed before they could make it, so they are stuck over the crossing blocking the path for pedestrians). Also the fact that on controlled crossings there are numbers that indicate to sighted people how many seconds are left before the lights change and it's unsafe to cross, but those numbers are not accessible for people who are blind or have low vision (discriminatory crossing design).
- Drivers not stopping when required to.
- Where corners are round and roads have potholes and gutters full of water even walking on a very sideways slopped footpath whilst you are walking ahead is difficult, as it hurts your ankles trying to stay upright, drawing your focus from where you are trying to walk.
- A lot of general noise from other vehicles, such as at an intersection. Or crossing roads where it's difficult to hear a car might be turning. E vehicles are part of this issue.
- Noise due to industrial business or road works going on at the time i want to cross.
- People on bikes or kids as well on bikes or scooters.
- Sometimes the ramp is too narrow.
- Not confident to do this on my own as I am very slow at walking and my peripheral neuropathy in both feet makes judging the levels of any path.
- Any hole, drain cover or gap in the pavement that traps the wheels of my wheelchair. This can mean whoever is pushing can't cross, or we get stuck, or the tyre comes off the wheelchair.
- The difficulty is the crazy driver, especially the young ones that likes to speed through any coloured lights.
- The police chase right on we have to freeze so we don't get squashed.

Other things that make road crossings difficult.

- It's a fact of people ignoring the law, or not understanding the threat they causing to a vision impaired person.
- At QVB in Sydney, I failed to cross Market at peak hour. The lights went green 8 times and I couldn't cross, because motorists kept driving into it, and Market Street was blocked. I have a well trained dog, but he will not meander through and array of bumper to bumper vehicles. I had to take the light rail to get across Market Street. Therefore my previous thought still stands: Red Light Cameras at pedestrian crossings! Otherwise they are not going to learn!
- Poor signal and access.
- People taking up the whole width making it hard to walk past them.
- Small dogs or children that suddenly appear in front of me.
- Over-crowding causes issues with other potential objects (like stationary vehicles).
- Road crossings are often stressful and overwhelming especially when any of these situations apply.
- Roundabouts in combination with hybrid cars the height of the guttering compared to the road is a big problem.
- Loud noises, example jackhammers leaf blowers, lawnmowers, loud music, large crowds of people crossing at the same time making it difficult to sometimes walk straight, hear when the beeper goes indicating you can cross, not being able to get close enough to line up with the curb or ramp near the crossing point to ensure safety.
- How tired I am. If I am very tired then crossing any road becomes much more difficult.
- Noise could be due to rain or wind. some rain is good it actually makes it easier to hear traffic. Wind is one of the most difficult environmental situations when navigating in the community.
- More education for drivers.
- Lights too fast.

- People that have normal sight should take note of people with Wheelie Walker's Guide Dogs, blind canes - especially the school kids and the parents with their young ones in prams, sometimes it's too hard, especially when it's Easter, Christmas, special events that may be happening around town.
- The speed limits in built-up areas should be no more than 50km/hr.
- Electric cars should be fitted with audible systems.
- Worn or poorly paved tactiles can be missed when the footpath is not adjacent to the gutter.
- Debri build up in the cut out can make entry difficult to determine how far you can step out or risk an unstable footing, not to mention cane tip catching or redirecting or the always fun binding up with something that will not release from the cane without assistance. Smooth road surface and crossings. Good lightings!
- You can only just keep banging on council's door to get some action. Good luck.
- My Guide Dog does most (things) for me.
- Inconsistent design.

Comments about floating bus stops.

- My dog is trained for that. He finds the next traffic light to get me off the island.
- The Cyclists may not check to see if you're crossing and run you over.
- The sudden change in road height can cause tripping.
- Bikes are a potential hazard for me in this case, because they're difficult to spot at night.
- I would not feel safe using these bus stops as they are not what I am used to and mean that I would have to travel further to get to the bus door. Bikes can also be incredibly difficult to hear, particularly in an already busy environment.
- I wouldn't at all be sure whether I was meant to be getting on the bus or not, I presume the crossing of the road/bike lane to the bus would not be controlled, and the noise of the idling bus would mask the sound of bikes/vehicles making the crossing a total gamble.

- Once I learned how to navigate tour and what sounds to listen for, I would be okay. It would be harder if it was a one off trip in an unfamiliar location
- The road had extra lane put In and the bus stop was in the middle of Rd with no lights to get to foot path took about 10mins to get across the road.
- Awareness that floating bus stop exist.
- Because there is enough room for me to stay in there and I don't feel like I'm going to be hit at all by any other vehicle.
- Vulnerable to collisions with cyclists and moving vehicles.
- It would be uneven and challenging to work out what bus is coming. Often drivers will call to me and ask if I need assistance, these bus stops wouldn't allow for that.
- While I could cross the road to the bus stop, it would be very difficult at night and particularly dangerous during poor weather.
- I would feel unsafe getting off the bus and would feel a bit disorientated.
- Riders not paying attention & colliding into me.
- They are difficult to understand how they work, where to stand etc.
- Disconnection causing uncertainty.
- Can be unsure if I'm on the actual road. Also, unsure if there are cyclists etc.
- No peripheral vision so am slow to anticipate bikes etc.
- Because if you're waiting for a bus in one area but then have to navigate a dangerous area when the bus arrives when you're on time pressure this is not ideal.
- It can be disorientating, especially if it is in the middle of a motorway.

Comments about shared footpaths.

- I have been run over by 8 e-bikes. Teenagers conducting a race on a footpaths. That somewhat killed my previous confidence. Mobility scooters are fine, but e-scooters can also become a menace if ridden at speed and come very close.
- It's fine as long as bike riders etc are respectful to others.

- The complexity of judging distance and speed as well and trying to figure out right-of-way can be stressful.
- I have nearly been knocked over on very many occasions on shared thoroughfares like this!.
- Shared footpaths do not provide enough space for me to confidently sweep my cane without hitting bikes or people. I would also be nervous of being hit by oncoming transport since it can be hard to hear bikes over the sound of my cane.
- People on bikes and scooters can avoid me.
- It's hard to trust bike and scooter riders will see me and give me the space I need. It can be a little frightening to have a bike or scooter speed past you from behind.
- Sometimes have bike coming for me and don't see it till about 3m away.
- Certain users are over aggressive and forget that it is shared.
- Users forget that it is not a training circuit.
- Because people don't look where they're going.
- I use a shared path often and am use to it and having to be mindful of cyclists and keeping to the left, but I am still vulnerable to collisions especially if the cyclist does not indicate they are approaching and I don't hear the bicycle until it is almost on me.
- I don't feel safe as I can't hear bikes and scooters coming from in front or behind and skateboarders have purposely almost ridden into me before. I've noticed that bike riders don't see the dogs harness and have verbally harassed me before for not moving far enough to the side.
- While I would have no problem sharing the footpath with simple pushbike users, ebikes run at particularly high speeds and many e-bikes do not make a noise so we know they're coming.
- I would hope people would be able to move around me however I feel that it is still risky as lots of people don't look where they're going and expect me and my Guide Dog to move out of the way which can be unsafe. People come very close to us and Nelly run into us, which is scary have had to many collisions.
- This is hard to try and navigate both with wheelchair and assistance dog.
- Bikes and scooters travel at speed and do not always slow down or indicate their presence.

- Can’t predict how reliable bicycle riders using bell to signal approach. It is assumed the pedestrian can see them.
- The sound of bakes and scooters travelling past me causes me anxiety. I worry about inadvertently moving into their lane.
- I don’t feel safe at all.

Comments about footpaths level with the street.

- Motor vehicles can come too close for comfort in that situation.
- More worried about tripping on a gutter.
- They are sometimes hard to gauge if the road mappings are faded.
- Fine through the day time. A little more difficult at night.
- While these paths are not ideal, I can simply follow the shoreline on the other side to avoid being close to the road. However, when it comes to crossing the road, navigating this would become difficult since there would be no indication of a crossing.
- Because I am unsure whether I am walking on the road where I need to be mindful of vehicles or f I am safely on the footpath.
- I have enough sight to feel confident if I know the area. I would be less confident in new areas.
- Because there’s no indication of when you walk onto the road and you could walk on the road and get hit by a car if you weren’t careful
- It is difficult to maintain straight line travel and you can very easily veer onto the road and into traffic. There is no tactile indication of the change from path to road.
- If the footpath is high contrast enough myself and my guide dog can manage this but slowly and carefully.
- I have enough vision to tell where the footpath ends and the street begins, but at night this is harder to distinguish
- Because it is extremely difficult to distinguish when I am on the road versus the footpath. I could be in the middle of the road and have no idea and it is a huge safety concern for me and my Guide Dog. It’s also hard for my Guide Dog to know The difference between the footpath and the road when they are at the same level.

- I don't feel confident at all walking on foot paths when they are at the same level as the road and would need somebody with me to inform me if I veered onto the road.
- Don't want to die by unknowingly walking into the path of a passing vehicle.
- This is inaccessible with a wheelchair because I might accidentally move on to the road and into traffic. With e-cars etc you cannot hear them to keep away from them.
- It is possible to veer too far out onto road.
- I have had experiences when I was on the road and not realised.
- Obviously because there is no tactile bar between the footpath and the road. It's easy to straight onto the road without knowing it. Extremely dangerous. Doesn't provide clear orientation when the path and street are at the same level.
- Challenges detecting when you are in a safe zone, for e.g not knowing if it is safe to stop for a moment.

Comments about flush intersections/continuous footpaths.

- My dog recognises those, they are usually not a problem. I live in a village without traffic lights. I am used to a certain lack of road safety.
- This is affected by the lighting in the area so may not be apparent in the dark or low light.
- Individuals in vehicles have a tendency not to give way at these types of crossings!
- Their location at street corners means it is more difficult for cars to see any Pedestrians trying to cross. As well as this, they provide no indication of where I could safely cross the road.
- Because I do not know that I have right of way and I do not know whether I am on the road or safely on the footpath. But unlike the footpaths that are flush with the road not just at a crossing point, at least these ones are only for a short period.
- I would trust that pedestrians have right of way.
- Drivers don't take pedestrians into consideration in most zebra crossings and this causes me to feel anxious about flush crossings or intersections.

- It helps knowing pedestrians have priority.
- Because I am unable to identify if I'm on the road or on a full path. It's extremely dangerous and very disorientating for me.
- Don't want to die by unknowingly walking into the path of a passing vehicle.
- I might accidentally move on to the road and into traffic
- If they are clearly marked or have hazard tiles.
- Again it takes away your ability to know where you are in your surroundings. Are you on the road or not?
- Again, challenging to know if you are in the roadway or in a safe zone, no tactile indication.
- I would feel extremely concerned about being hit by a vehicle.
- I could accidentally step on to the road, putting myself in harm's way.
- You really have no land marks to assist in knowing where you are and ensuring safety. You can also get disorientated and end up not where you intended as there is nothing to line up with.
- I know I will stray into traffic. I have done so in the past.
- Even if pedestrians have priority, cars and especially bikes and scooters rarely stop.
- I sometimes don't think I am crossing a road and don't check for traffic. Have had a near miss with this.

Comments about raised crossings.

- They are very safe, because the drivers have to slow down. Also the dog knows those very well.
- These are better crossings, because they slow vehicles down!
- As long as the road is aligned and there is a raised indicator on either side, I would feel safe to cross these roads. With correct cane use and caution, this would not hinder my confidence.
- I can usually hear cars bumping up and over so I have an idea the crossing is there, and cars are typically going slower, so it's safer, and these more often than not seem to have TGSIs to indicate when the road begins and when I have crossed it and am safely on the footpath again.

- The hump forces traffic to slow down, making it less likely they will miss the indicators for the crossing.
- The raised platform would require cars to slow down.
- The raised hump can be helpful, but I would still require a curb ramp at either end of the crossing to allow my Guide Dog and myself to know that it is a road crossing. Otherwise, I might just think it was a little hill orincline in a footpath. Cars also don't always stop when they should.
- The traffic is forced to slow due to the ramps and they must give way to pedestrians. This gives everyone more time to avoid an accident.
- Most Drivers slow down at least in my local area; they give a false sense of security to pedestrians.
- Because I dropped curb is how you tell when you are on the road. If there is no identify tactile marker it becomes very dangerous presuming you are talking about a wombat level crossing? I hear the cars are not slowing down all the time.
- This is more about the ignorance and disrespect of general public not looking out for each other. We appear to be living in a me first, I'm more important society these days.
- You can hear the car going over the bump when you are waiting to cross.
- I like physical landmarks so that I know when I am crossing a road. If I could identify with certainty that I was at a crossing, I might be okay with this. If I had no way of knowing, I would not be okay with it.
- Again, I could accidentally step on to the road putting myself in harm's way.
- I know I will stray into traffic. I have done so in the past.
- I actually haven't experienced these, so I don't know.
- I sometimes realise a road is there. Don't stop and don't check
- Too easy to stumble or trip. Clear markings for cars and easy to cross with level access.

Comments on Local Government.

- It took three weeks to check my dog's microchip number with local council. I had reason to believe the wrong microchip number was deactivated when my previous AD/GD died.
- Local governments are not always accessible and very cluttered to use with screen readers.
- I haven't tried that much except for paying rates.
- I have not tried but electronic format works best for me as is more common.
- When I ring for accessible format and any bills or anything like that, they send it out but they don't understand what is Accessibility form format.
- Can't speak with anyone.
- PDF documents are not friendly for the blind/low vision community when using a screen reader with jaws or NVDA, documents need to be converted into a microsoft word document.
- 'Go to website'
- I am unaware of it being provided so don't ask for it.
- The authorities need to provide education and information to the people. There are too many people unaware of their rights and their responsibilities.
- Some things are difficult to do on the computer. It may be because my computer skills are not fantastic. I have found by ringing the local council phone number. They are very helpful.
- Accessibility issues with websites, documents and apps.
- I rely on others for this information.
- Clear, precise, up to date information or feedback about concerns or changes implemented in the community.
- The website and its documents aren't always accessible.
- Lack of understanding on creating accessible information.
- They don't always wish to provide the information.
- My wife/carer does this for me.
- I don't know how and it's probably on the computer. I can't see well enough anymore to find it.

Comments on raising an issue, suggestion or complaint with local government.

- Illegal fishing of small beach wharf from remote village to suburban railway station. It's very dangerous for my dog and a tripping hazard for myself. I have been injured when people casting their lines hit me with the sinker. I had a big bruise on my shoulder and the fishing line plus hook was wrapped around my wrist. I have video evidence, and there are four signs that fishing from the wharf is prohibited. But it's a touristy area, and fishing is popular. I took it as far as the mayor. But the answer is that "Mr & Mrs General Public" is no co-operative and the village is too remote to police it. Btw there are two adjacent beaches where fishing is allowed, it's also allowed from the old quay wall, and fishermen can of course launch a boat or kayak. It really doesn't have to be exactly where the vessel comes alongside to set down and pick up passengers. But I consider this battle lost.
- Less people are going to bring up accessibility difficulties if councils refuse to respond or acknowledge them. I was sent an automated email and nothing further.
- Very similar issues will be experienced across NSW/ACT and so it is silly that the same issue would need to be raised multiple times in multiple Councils. There should be a standard and so the issue should only need to be raised once and local govenrments should then be responsible for ensuring that their local environment complies with the standards. But the issue seems to be that the standards themselves are insufficient and so it seems to be a total waste of time to raise an issue when they are so wide-spread. Moreover, given that these are often issues with the built environment, it seems expensive and unlikely that they will get changed, and it seems too late to influence things to raise the issue after the construction is already complete. I once made submissions on the design of the Metro stations but I don't think it made any difference so I do not feel like it is a worthwhile investment of my time given the effort it takes and the low likelihood it will have a positive outcome.
- Local governments should have dedicated contact methods so people with a disability can reach out and report accessibility related concerns.
- I received a text message letting me know that my complaint had been passed on but I never got any correspondence after that letting me know if they had actioned it
- Yes but advised there is development planned already but in a few years.

- Making sure that your site complies with web accessibility standards as most blind people use screen readers like jaws and NVDA.
- My local council does not care about access for residents. There are few footpaths, the ones we have are uneven and potholes. Tree roots and weeds are everywhere. There is a lack of pedestrian crossings. Paths are poorly designed. They have no intention of ever providing improved facilities. We even have a lookout that is supposedly designed for access but it is so full of leaf litter and candlebark it is dangerous.
- General disinterest.
- There must be multiple ways to do it, and you must be able to simply make a phone call for those people who
- cannot use digital platforms. In all cases, you should receive the same level of service and follow-up.
- an acknowledgement of receipt at the very least would be appreciated. A response explaining their intended
- actions would be ideal.
- It is important for local councils to communicate what they are doing and when any works will take place.
- I do not think that access and inclusion is a priority for my local council. they do not understand the issues.
- Easiest to go straight to the local member. It gets actioned quicker.
- Using snap send solve was quick and easy. It would be better to get a response.
- It seems I get better advice from Department Of Veteran Affairs and the Legacy group.
- I have applied with the local Government to get a pedestrian crossing where I need to cross a busy, 60km/hr road. I was unsuccessful, so was the local Vision Australia's Orientation and Mobility specialist, and our Retirement Village management. The result was that there is not enough traffic to warrant a pedestrian crossing. Council installed sginage that show pedestrians on it. Nobody takes notice and slows down. My stress level is very high when crossing this road.
- Uneven pavements causing me to fall.

Confidence to self-advocate.

- A lot of it has changed since COVID-19. It's a more aggressive and angry world. People demand their rights and use their elbows these days rather lend a helping hand. I am not very tall, just 1.4m - so I usually go under when it gets busy or crowded.
- I am well informed and confident.
- I feel confident and driven to advocate for those who come after me in my community. This is likely because I have faced many accessibility issues in the past which causes me to want to fight even harder for change and equality around my community.
- I am confident to self advocate for the big things. For smaller things it can be tiring and I'm willing to compromise more
- It depends what my knees are and if people are listening.
- Energy levels.
- It's often hard to know who to contact about an issue.
- When I need assistance sometimes it's hard for me to identify if people are staff members or just in the general public.
- Not always certain I have information to channel to most appropriate area.
- I feel this way (confident to advocate) because I have to be this way in order to survive.
- I'm older and comfortable with my blindness. I also work in the blindness sector and have significant exposure.
- If I am familiar with surroundings I am confident.
- When travelling people will always help when asked and they see the blind stick.
- I am managing, and am confident speaking up when necessary, but finding unfamiliar situations increasingly hard to negotiate.
- I've had experience in disability advocacy over time. I feel like I have good verbal communication skills to assist with this.
- I have self-advocated for many years and usually get a good result.

- I am already an advocate and advisor to State Government on disability access and inclusion and my entire career has been to drive access and inclusion for students and employees with disability.
- I am a confident person. I was raised to be able to self-advocate
- I am a very confident person and have lots of experience talking with government. I don't have a problem talking to people.

What respondents want advocacy organisations like Guide Dogs NSW/ACT to advocate for.

- Access to small restaurants! Education required, after Covid-19 small restaurants are scared to be shut down again, if they admit a Guide/Assistance Dog. They firmly believe it's against health regulations. I really don't want to call the cops to eat my dinner!
- An education drive for pet owners about working dogs. Most pet owners really don't understand how much. We rely on the help of our dogs, and how much distracting or attacking them by pet dogs without training can endanger our safety.
- Red Light Cameras at large pedestrian crossings in the Sydney CBD - especially near Townhall!
- Clearer footpaths (shoreline).
- Awareness campaign for drivers on parking correctly and not have boot, towbar, tray or tools overhang footpath.
- More tactiles in public spaces
- Higher fines for cafes or restaurants who refuse access to individuals with Guide Dogs
- More even/paved footpaths
- I would like advocacy organisations to work in conjunction with local councils to raise awareness for the importance of equal access in the community.
- Consultation with blindness organisations like Guide Dogs as part of any DA process affecting public spaces.
- Elimination/redesign of Telstra phone boxes (and other similar obstacles)

- Quicker and easier reporting of inaccessible crossings (whether due to ATS not working or misaligned curb/pram ramps or other issues), TTSS use in rideshare,
- People not walking around looking at phones all the time and not looking where they're going.
- People patting Guide Dogs and they need education of not to pat them.
- Educate people how to talk, guide and interact with people.
- Ride shares and footpaths on every street.
- E-Bikes to have some sort of automatic alerting device so people who are blind or have low vision can hear them coming
- A national Vision Impaired Persons travel pass (existing state-issued travel passes must be surrendered when the cardholder is no longer eligible, and eligibility criteria often includes a residency requirement).
- Just more in general: awareness in the community, more accessibility options in elections
- Greater accessibility within the built environment, greater awareness regarding Guide Dogs to decrease access refusals, training for businesses on how to provide assistance to people who are blind, particularly in healthcare settings
- awareness that low vision is not blind.
- how can technology help navigate low vision?
- advocate for better public transport options or options for transport support.
- Better foot paths, educate drivers & E scooter riders, functional tactiles.
- I would like to see more advocacy round taxi's and other rideshare platforms where both owner trained assistance dog who are either in training or have passed all appropriate test with a fully qualified assistance dog trainer to be able to access all rights that guide dogs have in the community and not to be refused on all forms of transports including airplanes and rideshare services and taxis.
- Fight for footpaths, especially in the Blue Mountains...for residents not tourists.
- Also for the front passenger seat of buses to be allocated for the vision impaired. It is a struggle to move along to the access seats in the middle of the bus. These are often taken which is not obvious to the vision impaired. That front seat would make life so much easier. All disability areas not the same.

- (Provide input at) design stage e.g. to prevent further use of black cement paths.
- Where not possible to line up corners then indent crossings to line up.
- Un-fancy fonts on train indicator boards.
- Clear footpaths; pedestrian crossing with audio signals and ramps on both sides.
- To make the wider community more aware of challenge of living with low vision.
- Public awareness on how blind people can be assisted number two audible sounds on electric vehicles including scooters and electric bikes
- They already do an excellent job.

We're here whenever you need us.

7-9 Albany Street,
St Leonards NSW 2065

1800 436 364

nsw.guidedogs.com.au

Guide Dogs.

ACN 000 399 744