

Children and Youth

Families of young children and teenagers noted a number of matters important to them and their children. These included:

- The importance of orientation and mobility training. Parents and young people expressed concern that it wasn't always readily available or flexible to families' needs.
- The need to continually update the children's library resources and ensure availability of items via post.
- Parents highly value and understand the critical importance of technological aids and equipment, and want to be informed about new developments.
- Parents indicated the importance of meeting with and learning from other families.

“I can't rave about them (ABWA) enough. You come out of there thinking you have one of the best children in the world.”

- Parent of a child with vision impairment

A couple of facts

- Over 7% of people who participated in the Connections Project surveys were interested in children or youth matters.
- Approximately 6% of people who responded to the Connections Project surveys expressed interest or concern about matters relating to primary and secondary education.

Parents appreciated the opportunity for contact with other parents that occurred at the youth and parent-focused consultation and expressed interest in this occurring more frequently. Following on from this, peer support for children and youth was also raised as a matter of great importance. Providing opportunities for children

and teens to socialise and develop connections with other young people with blindness or vision impairment drew great support.

Another matter that featured as a priority was that of ongoing contact with Association staff to plan for the future and to ensure delivery of appropriate services and support.

Did you know?

Do you know about the specific programs the Association provides for babies, children, teens and their families through our Children and Family Services program? They include:

- An Early Intervention Program. We see children with vision impairment from birth to 6 years of age in our Early Intervention Program. We provide individual and group services at our Perron Centre in Victoria Park, in the home and in the community. Programs are designed in partnership with parents and a range of therapists and professionals with specialist knowledge and skills in vision impairment.
- A School Age Program. We see children from 6 – 18 years of age and provide individual and group services at our Perron Centre in Victoria Park, in the home, at school and in the community. Programs are designed in partnership with parents and a range of therapists and professionals with specialist knowledge and skills in vision impairment.
- A playgroup for children aged four and under, held once a week and attended by a range of Children and Family Services staff.
- An integrated three and four-year-old Kindergarten Program onsite at the Perron Centre in Victoria Park.

- A Saturday Program for school-aged children which operates during school terms and provides children with a safe and supportive environment to try new activities and learn important life skills while having lots of fun. It also provides opportunities for peer support.
- A school holiday Fun Club program which provides opportunities for children aged 6 to 17 to participate in various activities during the school holidays.
- A camp is run each year for children aged 10 to 17 providing a safe opportunity for children to improve their independence and self-care skills. The camps also provide great opportunities for young people to develop friendships with other young people sharing similar life experiences.
- A specialist vision assessment and support program for children with a vision impairment aged 0 -18 receiving services from other agencies.
- A specialist consultative service to other service providers. This means that we can support other professionals assisting children who are blind or have vision impairment with our specialist knowledge. This is particularly effective for children living in regional areas receiving support from local service providers.

It is never too early to refer your child!

Our services are available to babies, children, and youth who meet the eligibility criteria. We support both people with low vision and people who are blind, so it is important to note that your child may be eligible for support due to 'low vision' and does not have to be blind to qualify for services. We are happy to talk this through with you. Feel free to contact the Program Manager for Children and Family Services on (08) 9311 8202 or by email at info@guidedogswa.com.au

What we will do next

- We will continue to improve and extend the children's library resources.
- We will endeavour to facilitate more opportunities for parents to connect informally with each other.
- We will continue to work towards expanding services to school-aged children and families.