

**Vision Australia position on touchscreen technology**

December 2016

**Introduction**

Touchscreens are being used on a rapidly-increasing number of household appliances, smartphones and other communications technology, computers, information kiosks, ticket-based queuing systems, government services and terminals used for making financial transactions. There are no national or international standards which govern the accessibility of touchscreen-based technology for people with disability, including people who are blind or have low vision.

A number of companies, including Apple and Google, have developed methods for making touchscreen-based devices accessible to people who are blind or have low vision, but these solutions are not standardised across manufacturers and operating systems.

The vast majority of touchscreen-based devices available in the marketplace and the community currently do not incorporate any accessibility features, and are therefore inaccessible to people who are blind or have low vision.

**Vision Australia's position on touchscreen technology and accessibility**

* Touchscreen devices have been developed and introduced into the marketplace and community without proper consideration of their impact on accessibility for people who are blind or have low vision. Unless active steps are taken to improve the accessibility of touchscreen technology, people who are blind or have low vision will increasingly be denied access to household appliances, and will be unable to participate fully and independently in the community and the economy.
* Standards-setting bodies at a national and international level must, as a matter of urgency, develop evidence-based standards for the accessibility of touchscreen technology.
* Developers of touchscreen-based devices must incorporate features at the design stage that provide independent access for people who are blind or have low vision.
* A range of options must be provided for people who are blind or have low vision to practise and become confident and familiar with the gestures and other techniques that are required to independently use devices with touchscreens.

Vision Australia works cooperatively and collaboratively with government, industry and organisations in the disability sector to seek functional and practical accessibility for people who are blind or have low vision. We take an open, flexible and constructive approach to the development of accessibility features generally, including touchscreen accessibility.

Vision Australia does not endorse, join or actively promote campaigns that focus exclusively on one approach, such as the retention of traditional keypads, to the exclusion of other approaches.

**Vision Australia's position on touchscreen-based payment devices including the Albert terminal**

There is no single solution to making touchscreen-based devices fully accessible to people who are blind or have low vision. However, in the context of the unique requirements of financial transactions, any accessible solution must not depend on the knowledge or intervention of a shopkeeper, restaurant waiter, or other merchant. Under no circumstances should a customer who is blind or has low vision be required to disclose their PIN to a third party in order to complete a financial transaction.

Vision Australia has made numerous submissions to government and industry in which we have drawn attention to the need for touchscreen payment devices to be made accessible. The views expressed in our submissions are informed by our experience with touchscreen technology and gesture-based input techniques, and are consistent with our goal of ensuring that people who are blind or have low vision are able to independently use and operate the full range of community and financial infrastructure that is available. Our views reflect the fact that no well-researched, evidence-based, and satisfactory solutions have been implemented on touchscreen payment terminals to date, and that more development is required before touchscreen-based payment terminals can be considered sufficiently accessible to be used in taxis and other places where financial transactions are made.

The Albert payment terminal was introduced into Australia by the Commonwealth Bank in mid-2015. It has become increasingly popular as a payment (EFTpos) terminal in the retail sector, but has many other advanced functions that are made possible because of its flexible touchscreen-based interface. It must be emphasised that the Albert payment terminal is not the only touchscreen-based device in the marketplace used for making financial transactions.

The Albert payment terminal incorporates several features that have been developed specifically for that device, and which provide a non-visual method for entering a PIN, using gestures such as flicks and taps, as well as audio feedback. These accessibility features currently require activation by the merchant rather than the customer, and for this and other reasons they have not, in practice, allowed people who are blind or have low vision to enter their PIN accurately, conveniently and with confidence.

Vision Australia, together with other organisations, has provided ongoing and consistent feedback to the Commonwealth Bank about the need for significant improvements to be made to the Albert payment terminal before it offers an acceptable level of amenity, convenience and confidence to people who are blind or have low vision when entering their PIN.

In October 2015 Vision Australia worked with the Commonwealth Bank to facilitate a number of sessions designed to familiarise clients with the Albert terminal. Following these sessions, Vision Australia made a public statement, published on the Bank's website, reflecting our confidence that the Bank would quickly incorporate significant improvements to the accessibility of Albert based on the clear feedback from these sessions. At Vision Australia's request, this statement was removed from the Bank's website until the improvements have been made and a satisfactory accessibility solution developed.

Vision Australia is committed to assisting the Commonwealth Bank develop solutions that will see the Albert terminal offer a functional level of accessibility which meets the needs of people who are blind or have low vision.

## Further information

If you would like this Position Statement in an alternative format or wish to discuss it with Vision Australia’s Government Relations and Policy team, please contact us:

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