

MP:  
Address:

September 2007

Dear Federal Member,

## **Re Low Vision Aids and Adaptive Technology for the Blind and Vision Impaired**

I am writing to express my concern for the inequity of subsidy for low vision aids and adaptive technology for those with blindness and low vision. I seek your support to ensure that there is equal access and affordability for the blind and vision impaired in regard to low vision aids and adaptive technology across all States and Territories in Australia.

### **What is the issue?**

Currently, where you live in Australia determines what assistance you can access.

### **Why?**

There is no standardised subsidy across the States and Territories that provides equitable access to low vision aids and adaptive technology for people who are blind or have low vision. A preliminary analysis conducted by the Macular Degeneration Foundation Ltd demonstrates gross inconsistencies between States and Territories (See table).

### **What is the Impact of this inequity?**

There are profound economic, social and emotional impacts associated with limited access to low vision aids and adaptive technology. It has been shown to significantly decrease independence, reduce quality of life and increase social isolation. It also results in a significant and growing cost to government for assisted living options for people who can no longer live independently.

### **What has been done?**

Over the last year there has been very slow progress in addressing the issue. Recently a joint working group was formed to develop a cross-jurisdictional policy response.

### **What can be done?**

In one year the Federal Government can take a leadership role to:

- Fund a national audit of the provision, affordability and accessibility of low vision aids, technology and services to all Australians.
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*Please Turn Over*

- Provide an outcomes paper, in cooperation with all the States and Territories, which outlines a pathway to a resolution for an equitable, practical and co-ordinated approach to low vision subsidies which benefits all Australians who are blind or vision impaired.
- Provide financial support to these processes and their outcomes in cooperation with State and Territory Governments.

### What is your position on this issue?

Will you support the actions outlined above and ensure they are undertaken in the next year?

I would appreciate your response regarding your position on the course of action outlined above.

Yours sincerely,

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Address:</b>	

*Table of Low Vision Aids Subsidies for people on pensions per State and Territory*

<b>State</b>	<b>Hand-held Magnifier (Approximate Average Cost \$110)</b>	<b>Electronic Magnifier (Approximate Average Cost \$4000)</b>	<b>Subsidy Provided by</b>
<b>ACT</b>	\$100 Every two years	\$100 Every two years	Low Vision Scheme
<b>NSW</b>	\$199 Every two years	<b>0</b>	Vision Care
<b>NT</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	NA
<b>QLD</b>	20% Discount no time limit	\$1000 Every four years	(QLD Blind Association)
<b>SA</b>	50% or \$2000	50% or \$2000	(Royal Society for the Blind)
<b>TAS</b>	70% or Maximum \$275 Every two years	<b>0</b>	Spectacle Assistance Scheme
<b>VIC</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	NA
<b>WA</b>	50% or \$50 Every two years	<b>0</b>	Spectacles Subsidy Scheme

Compiled by the Macular Degeneration Foundation Ltd, August 2007.