

Thank You

Please accept my sincere appreciation and thanks for your generous response to our end of financial year appeal. The following are highlights of the year, which were possible because of the generosity of our many supporters.

Some Highlights 2009 - 2010

- ✓ Stopped the “capping” of the Extended Medicare Safety Net payment for Lucentis (treatment for wet MD) in September 2009 so patients had continued access and support for the treatment
- ✓ Answered an average of 74 calls a day (18,391 for the year) to the Helpline
- ✓ Distributed over 12,000 MD information kits to the community
- ✓ Over 34,000 people registered on our database whom we help, support and inform
- ✓ Education sessions across Australia, with over 8,000 people attending
- ✓ The national TV and radio campaign, continuing to achieve record high levels of awareness
- ✓ Best result ever for MD Awareness Week 2010, with huge media exposure and 20 million media impressions
- ✓ 272,429 visits to the website – a massive 60% increase

The Next Year... 2010 - 2011

Your ongoing generous support will enable us to:

- ✓ Advocate on your behalf for equity and affordability of low vision aids and technology
- ✓ Continue our TV and radio awareness campaign to ensure Australians are having their eyes tested and macula checked
- ✓ Produce our next guide, *Low Vision Aids and Technology*
- ✓ Expand and update our publications including *What to Ask Your Eye Care Professional?*
- ✓ Embark upon a major research giving program to find reasons and answers for this disease
- ✓ Implement an MD Foundation pilot Tele-support Program
- ✓ Provide education program for GP's including the provision of a Macular Degeneration Foundation Amsler grid for every GP in Australia



MD Foundation CEO Julie Heraghty (right) with Anastacia Palaszczuk – Queensland Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs at the 2010 Macular Degeneration Awareness Week launch in May.

The generosity and support of our clients, volunteers, donors, corporate sponsors, government and all those who support our work inspires us to do even better in the year ahead.

Julie Heraghty
Chief Executive Officer

Low Vision Aids & Technology Campaign

We Won't Give Up!

Due to the lack of a national subsidy for Low Vision Aids and Technology, the MD Foundation has championed a campaign to have this issue addressed and rectified.

Back in 2007, prior to the Federal election, the MD Foundation and many of our supporters wrote to sitting Members of the Federal Parliament requesting that those with MD and low vision have equal access to subsidies for Low Vision Aids and Technology across Australia.



All responses by Federal Members in 2007 were compiled by the MD Foundation as a record of any commitment or undertaking.

For over five years, across successive Governments, there has been minimal response to our ongoing requests to address this matter. There have been no tangible outcomes after years of discussion, committees and frameworks.

In August 2010 the MD Foundation again conducted a campaign on your behalf, in the knowledge that our MD community would be right behind our efforts. We were unable to advise you of this campaign earlier due to the short election timeframe.

As part of the campaign process, for both the 2007 and 2010 Federal elections, we undertook an audit on subsidies for two key low vision aids for concession card holders across Australia. This showed that where you lived determined how well you could see, with major subsidy disparities between the States. The August 2010 audit also included five major health insurers.



On completion of the 2010 audit a standard letter was sent to candidates for the House of Representatives and the Senate, and included any prior response by that MP from the 2007 campaign.

A copy of the letter to all candidates has been included with this newsletter.

Where to Now?

The MD Foundation will now pursue the issue again with Federal Members of Parliament to request support for a fair outcome on this matter.

This newsletter was delayed to await the outcome of the 2010 Federal election so that you too can support this campaign.



Low Vision Aids & Technology Campaign

What Can You Do?

You will find a letter enclosed to send to your elected local Federal Member of Parliament titled:

1. Federal Member Letter

If you know the name and address of your elected Federal Member, and you are able to send the letter directly, then:

1. Insert the name of the local Federal MP and the electorate
2. Complete your name, address and telephone details
3. Tick box (3) if you agree to have a copy of the reply from your Federal Member sent to the MD Foundation
4. Sign and date the letter
5. Post it to your local MP!

OR

If you would like the MD Foundation to complete and send the letter on your behalf then:

1. Complete your name, address and telephone details (most important)
2. Tick box (1) so that we have your permission to forward the letter on your behalf
3. Tick both boxes (2) and (3) if you so choose. The MD Foundation preference is for you to tick both boxes
4. Sign and date the letter
5. Send the letter to the MD Foundation
6. Your letter to your local Federal Member will be sent by the MD Foundation on your behalf



You will find a letter enclosed to send to your Private Health Fund titled:

2. Private Health Fund Letter

This is for those who have private health insurance to complete and send to your private health insurer. You will need to obtain the address of your health fund and post the letter directly to them.

If you require any assistance with reading or completing the letters please phone the MD Foundation

1800 111 709

Did you Know?

A recent Access Economics report titled the *"Economic Impact of Vision Loss in Australia in 2009"* stated:

- The most common form of blindness is Age-Related Macular Degeneration, often referred to as AMD**
- 50% of blindness among Australians aged 40 or over is attributable to AMD**
- 7% of the allocated health system expenditure was spent on AMD, the lowest of expenditures for any of the major eye conditions**

Living Well with MD



Living well with MD means maintaining quality of life and independence. Being engaged with life, activities, friends, family and the community can make a real difference.

The Foundation would like to encourage all our clients to keep active. You will generally find there is a myriad of local activities, organisations and support groups you can join. Deciding what you like to do, and when and how to do it, is the first step.

There is always a way to partake in activities that make you feel good. Music is a universal language which can be widely shared with others. Do you love to sing? Perhaps you have been a singer in earlier years, and even if you haven't and only ever flexed those vocal cords in the shower, why not consider joining a choir!

Make contact with your local Council and see if there is an existing local choir you can join, or



why not invite a few of your friends to morning tea and form your very own choir. Perhaps your church or social group has someone musical who may help. Your local library can also advertise for you on the community notice board. With Christmas fast approaching a repertoire of carols could be just the thing to start you off!

For inspiration, we have heard about a group based in Massachusetts in the United States called the Young@Heart Chorus. This amazing chorus has been running since 1982 with the current members ranging in age from 73 to 89.

There are some with prior professional theatre or music experience, others who have performed extensively on an amateur level, and some who never stepped onto a stage before turning eighty. For those with access to the web visit www.youngatheartchorus.com to find out more about this inspiring group.

Alternative Format Newsletter

For those who find reading this newsletter difficult, it is now available in text-only, large print or audio format. A copy can be emailed or posted to you by calling 1800 111 709. It is also available for download from the MD Foundation's website www.mdfoundation.com.au.

National TV and Radio Campaign

The Macular Degeneration Foundation continues to lead the world in raising awareness of MD and yet another national TV & radio campaign is on air now! Thank you to Novartis who have been outstanding in their support of the MD Foundation and this campaign.

Advocating on Your Behalf

The Productivity Commission conducted two recent inquiries which related to the MD community namely, *Disability Care and Support* and *Caring for Older Australians*. The MD Foundation put forward a submission to both inquiries.

Christmas is Coming...



Send a Beautiful Message!

Our first ever Christmas cards were such a hit last year, we are doing it again.

Three beautiful new Christmas cards are available, each featuring a specially created Christmas recipe by chef Vanessa Jones and MD Foundation Patron Ita Buttrose, co-authors of *Eating for Eye Health - The Macular Degeneration Cookbook*.

Each of the three cards is similarly themed to our 2009 cards to allow an ongoing collection of this unique series.

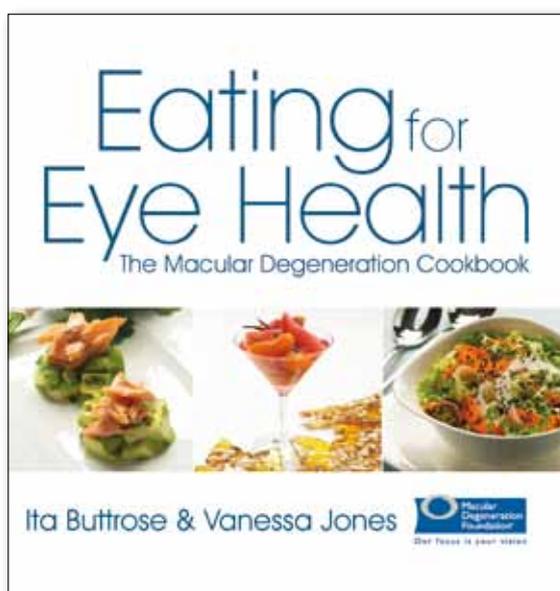
If you loved last year's cards we still have a small number of these available, so be quick to order.

Both new and existing cards retail for \$12.00 for a mixed pack of nine (plus postage and handling).



A Special Christmas Gift

Eating for Eye Health - The Macular Degeneration Cookbook is a beautiful Christmas gift for family and friends and includes over 90 delicious easy-to-follow recipes. All recipes have been developed with eye health friendly foods, ensuring good health comes with a great taste. This cookbook will certainly become a family favourite. The cookbook retails for \$24.95 (plus postage and handling).



Enclosed is an order form for both the Christmas cards and the cookbook, or call the Foundation on 1800 111 709.

Place your order today!

Evaluation by our Clients

"83% rated our service as good or excellent"

Every year a random sample of our clients are asked to complete a survey rating the Foundation's services. Thank you to those who participated this year. The results were again excellent. The Foundation's key services were each rated out of a total of four. Our highest ranking services were our Helpline and Education Sessions, each scoring 3.5. These were closely followed by our Publications at 3.4, Quarterly Newsletter at 3.3 and Website at 3.0.

"I receive your newsletter regularly and find it informative and most inspiring. Thank you so much!"

New Tele-Support Program

The Foundation has established a Tele-support program to help people with Macular Degeneration who may be geographically isolated or are unable to connect with a local support group.

The program will offer two telephone support sessions per month for up to 25 participants per session - lasting one and a half hours each.

Each session will include a presentation on a topic relevant to MD, followed by a question and answer time. The criteria to participate is that you have Macular Degeneration with some vision loss.

The presentations will be recorded and made available to download via our website.

**Places are limited, so please register early.
For more information please call 1800 111 709.**

Date and Time	Topic and Guest Speaker
Tuesday 19 Oct 2010 Session 1: 10.30am Session 2: 2.00pm	Topic: Diagnosed with MD? What can we learn from others for a positive journey? Presenter: Julie Heraghty - Chief Executive Officer, MD Foundation
Wednesday 17 Nov 2010 Session 1: 10.30am Session 2: 2.00pm	Topic: Eating well for MD - lifestyle, nutrition and supplements. Presenter: Pam Stone - Director of Education, Blackmores
Wednesday 1 Dec 2010 Session 1: 10.30am Session 2: 2.00pm	Topic: The latest in research and treatment for MD. What does the future hold? Presenter: Dr Jim Runciman - Retina Specialist
Wednesday 12 Jan 2011 Session 1: 10.30am Session 2: 2.00pm	Topic: What low vision support services are available? The low vision assessment and low vision rehabilitation. Presenter: Jane Ellis - Senior Manager Client Services, Vision Australia

Donations

Thank you for supporting the Macular Degeneration Foundation. As a charitable organisation, we rely on your generosity to service the MD Community across Australia. If you are able to help us at this time a donation slip and reply paid envelope is enclosed for your convenience. You can also make a secure online donation using your credit card at:

www.mdfoundation.com.au

All donations over \$2 are tax deductible

Thank you to all our wonderful supporters for their ongoing generosity.

Contact us

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DISCLAIMER: This newsletter is produced by the Macular Degeneration Foundation Australia.

It is intended as a newsletter and its contents do not constitute medical advice and should not be relied on as such. September 2010