

## What a difference we are making together! We still need your support

In our last newsletter the MD Foundation asked for your support to ensure the Prime Minister renewed our Federal funding in the May budget. Thousands of letters of support were sent to the Prime Minister, a magnificent response for which I am most grateful. The funding agreement was not considered as part of the 2009 Federal budget. However, all is not lost.

**The Department of Health and Ageing has confirmed the funding request is still under consideration.**

**There is no doubt that your support is still critical.**

You can continue to let your thoughts be known by contacting your local Federal Member and/or writing to the Hon Nicola Roxon, Minister for Health and Ageing to support the Macular Degeneration Foundation Federal funding renewal over four years of \$0.571 million.

Hon Nicola Roxon, MP  
Minister for Health and Ageing  
PO Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Thank you for your vital assistance!

Julie Heraghty, Chief Executive Officer

MD Foundation CEO Julie Heraghty with the Hon Tanya Plibersek, Minister for Housing and Minister for the Status of Women, at the SBS Foundation Launch.

### Celebrating good news

We continuously apply for all available funding opportunities through government, private philanthropic trusts and corporate sponsors. To date this financial year we have submitted 55 funding applications.

Some recent wins have included:

- The NSW Government renewed our three year grant. This contributes to vital services for the MD community such as education, publications and telephone support.
- The ANZ Staff Foundation granted \$6,360 to the MD Foundation to produce a pilot audio newsletter.
- The MD Foundation was one of 23 successful charities from 500 applications to receive a share of \$2million worth of SBS television airtime in 2009 and 2010. This will involve our "How's Your Macula?" TV advertisement being aired for various communities such as Greek and Italian.



# MD Foundation launches *Eating for Eye Health*

As part of the 2009 Macular Degeneration Awareness Week the Foundation has officially launched the *Eating for Eye Health* cookbook. The Foundation partnered with Australian media icon and Patron of the MD Foundation, Ita Buttrose, and leading Sydney chef, Vanessa Jones, to produce the *Eating for Eye Health* cookbook.

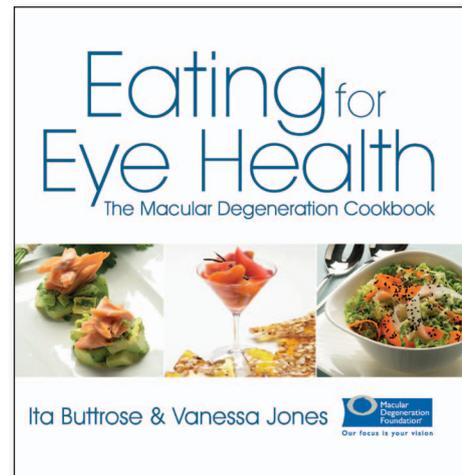
Ita's expertise in this area, her passion and tireless dedication combined with the enthusiasm and talent of chef Vanessa Jones has produced the first comprehensive cookbook for eye health. It provides breakfast, lunch, dinner and snack ideas using eye health friendly foods, as well as important information on nutrients essential for eye health.

Ita Buttrose first became involved with the MD Foundation three years ago because her late father, Charles, a celebrated journalist and author, suffered from MD as did his three siblings.

"Dad died about ten years ago, but he lost his sight in his eighties," Ms Buttrose explained. "It was terrible for him because, as a journalist and author, he started the day reading the papers," Ms Buttrose said. "That's why I'm passionate about eye health and that's why I'm involved with the MD Foundation."

Chef Vanessa Jones is also passionate about good eye health because her Uncle Laurie has MD. "I am well aware of its devastating effects. I promised him the first copy of the book," she said.

The cookbook is essential in the kitchen and it is a wonderful gift for birthdays, Christmas or even a Father's Day present!



*Eating for Eye Health* is available from the MD Foundation in both printed and audio format. It is also available through all good book stores and major department stores. Every cookbook sold supports the Macular Degeneration Foundation.

**An order form for *Eating for Eye Health* is enclosed with this newsletter. The cost is \$24.95 plus postage and handling.**

## Knowing nutrition

As part of our focus on nutrition and good eye health in this newsletter we have enclosed a copy of our updated *Nutrition and Supplements* fact sheet. It contains information on foods for eye health including nutrition information, supplements and the latest research.



## DONATIONS

Thank you for supporting the Foundation. A donation slip and reply envelope is included for your convenience if you are able to help us at this time. All donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

We thank all our wonderful supporters for their generosity.

# Living Well with MD

## Stop to smell the flowers

MD Foundation CEO, Julie Heraghty, recently attended the opening of the Ivanhoe Park Fragrant Garden for the vision impaired in Manly, NSW. The garden features a large and delightful variety of aromatic and scented plants including lavender, pineapple sage, lemon scented myrtle and tea tree, mint bush and jasmine.

This beautiful fragrant garden is something the whole community can enjoy, but has a particular focus on the needs of people with vision impairment.

The garden is the result of the combined efforts of the Council's Access Committee, Civic Design Department and the Manly Warringah Vision Impaired Support Group.

You may like to check if there is a possibility of creating a fragrant garden for the vision impaired in your local area.

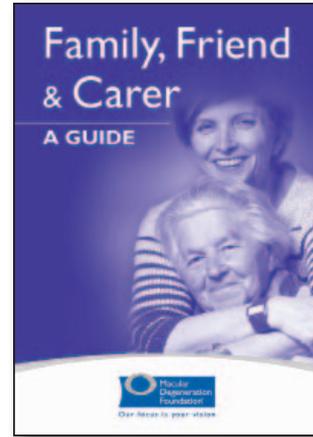


MD Foundation CEO with Manly Deputy Mayor Councillor Adele Heasman at the opening of the Fragrant Garden.

## Support groups run by low vision agencies

Support groups provide an opportunity to share experiences and ideas in a sharing and positive environment. Access to support groups in some cases can be through teleconference where you dial in and are part of a group discussion.

The type of support group offered varies between agencies; so contact your low vision organisation to discuss your needs. If you are unsure of which agency to contact please contact the Foundation and we will assist you.



## Family, Friend & Carer - A Guide

This publication has recently been updated and re-printed. It provides vital information for carers, family members and friends of people with low vision. It also offers strategies on how to deal with the important role of being a carer. It has a helpful directory of services and is available free of charge by calling the Foundation on 1800 111 709.

## Upcoming education sessions

The Foundation will be conducting the following education sessions. If you would like to attend please call the Foundation on **1800 111 709** to RSVP.

Sessions run approximately two hours.

3 June	10am	Mosman, NSW
9 June	9.30am	Armidale, NSW
9 June	2.30pm	Tamworth, NSW
12 June	10am	Darwin, NT
15 June	2pm	Burnie, TAS
16 June	10am	Launceston, TAS
17 June	10am	Floreat, WA (Chinese)
25 June	11.30am (3 hrs)	Baulkham Hills, NSW Low Vision Day
1 July	10am	Lake Macquarie, NSW
24-26 July	TBC	Sydney Retirement & Lifestyle Expo, NSW

# Research update

## Project Vision III

The Foundation will shortly begin our third major research project – Project Vision III. This year we are undertaking three surveys:

1. *MD Foundation evaluation*: An evaluation of the services we provide to you to give us feedback and ideas on how we can improve our services to you.
2. *Wet treatment options and outcomes*: With the changes in treatment over the last three years we want to understand your experiences and the barriers that may exist to treatment, especially accessibility and affordability.
3. *Living with MD*: To determine how low vision services and aids impact on the quality of life of those with MD; and to identify if there are any barriers to accessing these aids and services in Australia.

Over the next few months, a random selection of participants will receive a questionnaire or a phone call from Cherie, our Research Officer. Thank you for helping us in our research work.

## Medicare funding of OCT

The Federal Medical Services Advisory Committee (MSAC) has determined there is “currently insufficient evidence to recommend public funding of Optical Coherence Tomography (OCT) for the assessment of macular disease.”

OCT forms an essential part of the assessment of patients with Wet MD and has been used in clinical practice in Australia for over five years. It is an important diagnostic tool that provides high resolution imaging of the retina and is used all over the world and accepted as a standard and necessary test.

Many MD clients are affected by the decision not to fund OCT. The Foundation has available a standard letter for you to simply sign and send to the Federal Minister for Health and Ageing about the need for OCT funding. Contact the MD Foundation on 1800 111 709.

## MD and cataracts

The National Eye Institute (NEI) in the United States recently released results of a retrospective study assessing the risk of developing advanced Age-related Macular Degeneration after cataract surgery.

Researchers found no clear effect of cataract surgery on the risk of progression to advanced AMD. Previous studies did not look at the retina prior to cataract surgery as this study did.

“This data, which is contrary to previously reported results, may provide some reassurance to patients with AMD who are considering cataract surgery,” said Dr Emily Chew, Deputy Director of the NEI Division of Epidemiology and Clinical Applications.

## Stem cell research and MD

A stem cell therapy is being developed which gives hope to those with Age-related Macular Degeneration. The Institute of Ophthalmology at University College London and Moorfields Eye Hospital in Britain have completed trials on rats and pigs using embryonic stem cells. The trials demonstrated stem cells can prevent blindness in these animals with a similar disease to AMD.

The clinical trial is due to begin within two years and it is hoped it will become a routine one-hour procedure that will be generally available within seven years. This research is expected to be the second clinical trial in the world to use embryonic stem cells on humans. The first, on patients with spinal cord injuries, will start in the US later this year.

## Avastin and bowel cancer

A recent announcement by the Federal Government placing Avastin on the PBS for use in the treatment of bowel cancer has no relevance to people with MD. The Foundation has received some calls from the MD community enquiring about this announcement. Clinical trials for Avastin for use as a treatment for Wet MD are still ongoing. The MD Foundation will continue to monitor these trials.

## Contact us

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