

MEDIA RELEASE

13 March 2013

National Disability Insurance Scheme continues to exclude over 65s Australians say – It's just unfair!

The Macular Disease Foundation Australia is furious with the Federal Government's ambiguous amendments to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) announced today.

Despite the recent extensive Senate Committee consultation process, the Government continues to ignore the majority view that people who acquire a disability after the age of 65 years should be included in the NDIS.

A national Galaxy survey commissioned by the Macular Disease Foundation Australia in February revealed that 82% of people said that it was unfair to exclude people who acquire a disability over 65 years.

Macular Disease Foundation Australia CEO, Julie Heraghty said, "Letting people fall through the cracks of two Government reform agendas based on an arbitrary pension age cut off is unfair and unjust.

"If you acquire a disability, such as legal blindness from macular degeneration after the age of 65 years, you are presently excluded from the support of the NDIS and expected to be catered for in the aged care system.

"The NDIS is not providing older Australians with the peace of mind that they deserve. On top of this, the aged care system is not powered to care for those with a disability of blindness or serious vision loss, even under the present aged care reform," said Heraghty.

The Macular Disease Foundation recently presented a compelling case to the Senate Committee alongside National Seniors Australia stating that the Government needs to extend the NDIS to include people who acquire a disability after 65 or find another solution very quickly.

"What is alarming is that Australians are unaware of the over 65 year old exclusion. The national survey also revealed that only 3% of all Australians know that the NDIS exclusion starts at age 65 years," said Heraghty.

For the estimated 167,000 people who have late stage age-related macular degeneration and experience serious vision impairment or blindness, virtually all are aged over 65 and therefore will be excluded from the NDIS.

"The Government has an obligation to support older Australians who go blind. The older you get, the harder it gets, and we can't let this group suffer in silence," said Heraghty.

Media contact:

Clare Hammond (02) 8987 2110 / 0427 689689 chammond@porternovelli.com.au

ENDS



MEDIA RELEASE

13 March 2013

About the Macular Disease Foundation Australia

The Macular Disease Foundation Australia (formerly the Macular Degeneration Foundation) is the national charity committed to reducing the incidence and impact of macular disease in Australia.

In January 2013 the Macular Degeneration Foundation proudly changed its name to the Macular Disease Foundation Australia to champion all macular diseases primarily macular degeneration, along with diabetic retinopathy, retinal vein occlusion and macular dystrophies.

For further information on macular degeneration, phone the free call number 1800 111 709 or visit www.mdfoundation.com.au.

About Macular Degeneration

Macular degeneration is the leading cause of blindness and vision loss in Australia. All Australians over the age of 50 years should have an eye test and make sure their macula is checked. The macula is the central part of the retina, which is the light-sensitive tissue at the back of the eye. The macula processes all central visual images and is responsible for the ability to drive, see colours clearly, read and recognise faces. Macular degeneration causes damage to the macula, resulting in central vision loss.