Re: Vision Australia response to Aged Care (Living Longer Living Better) Bill 2013

Dear Ms Westcott

Vision Australia is pleased to provide a response to Aged Care (Living Longer Living Better) Bill 2013.

Vision Australia has for more than 18 months engaged with the various inquiries and made representations on behalf of senior Australians living with blindness.

With the announcement on the National Disability Insurance Scheme in December 2012 of the scheme being open to people under 65 years old, the need for certainty and clarity for seniors living with blindness has become even more pressing.

At present, in order for a senior to be eligible for support they must:

- be aged 65 or over, or 50 or over if you're of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent
- live in the community
- have difficulty doing everyday tasks, and
- be likely to need to go into long term residential care without assistance from Commonwealth HACC services.

We believe the current eligibility and assessment process restricts seniors living with and preparing for blindness from accessing appropriate services and support.

On 27 August 2012, Vision Australia wrote to the Minister outlining the fact that current funding for older Australians living with blindness is limited, but that basic and intermediate packages would assist people to live independently.

The impact of blindness on senior Australians is significant:

- Risk of falls doubles
- Risk of depression triples
- Risk of hip fractures increases four to eight times
- Admission to nursing homes three years early
- Social dependence doubles

We strongly believe that the combination of basic skill development, equipment provision, and effective support from trained people who have sound understanding of working with older
people who experience vision loss greatly assists people to maintain connected and live normal and safe lives.

While we understand that the Australian Government is looking at these issues through a phased and coordinated approach, Vision Australia remains concerned to ensure that seniors living with blindness do not fall through the cracks.

Blindness services delivered through Living Longer Living Better would assist to:

- extend the time people live within their own home.
- increase mobility skills so that people can move safely around their homes and local community.
- reduce the likelihood of falls.
- increase the ability of people to perform everyday activities such as cooking, personal grooming, and cleaning.
- meet information needs.
- provide the right level of in-home and community social support.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Aged Care (Living Longer Living Better) Bill 2013 and associated issues and we look forward to further developments.

Yours sincerely

David Speyer
Acting Chief Executive Officer
CC - The Hon Mark Butler MP