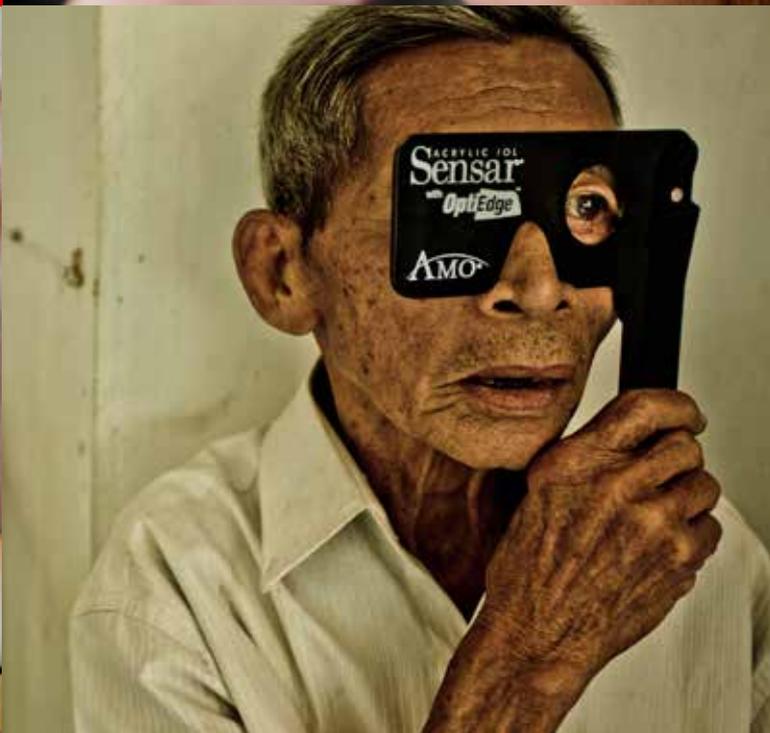
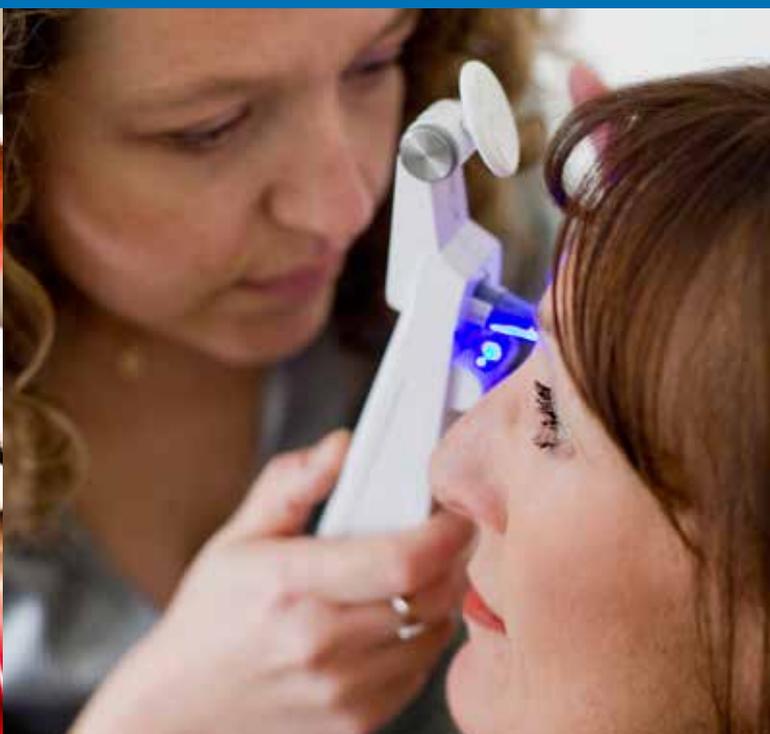


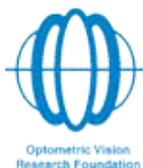
Towards 2020:

A shared vision of working in partnership
for eye health and vision care

Vision 2020 Australia



This policy platform has been developed in consultation with members of Vision 2020 Australia's national and global policy committees





Vision 2020 Australia

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A shared vision

This policy platform presents a shared vision for eye health and vision care, where no one has avoidable blindness or vision loss and all people who are blind or vision impaired are fully included in the community. Working in partnership, we can prevent and treat avoidable blindness and vision loss in Australia and our region; and we can ensure people of all ages who are blind or vision impaired have equal access to services to support independence and community participation.

Eye health and vision care across Australia and the Indo-Pacific region is cost effective, reduces poverty and will drive sustainable economic growth as we head towards 2020. Australia has a strong and proud history of global leadership and is well-placed with the right knowledge, the right expertise and the right partnerships to take our leadership to the next level to reduce avoidable blindness and vision loss and ensure the full participation of people who are blind or vision impaired.

Why blindness and vision loss?

Right now, more than 575,000 people in Australia live with blindness or a vision impairment, making vision loss one of the most prevalent chronic health conditions.

- With a rapidly ageing population, it is estimated that by the year 2020, close to 1 million Australians will be vision impaired including 100,000 blind if action is not taken.
- Blindness and vision impairment disproportionately affects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, with six times the rate of blindness and three times the rate of vision loss than the broader population; accounting for 11 per cent of the health gap.
- The total annual economic cost of vision loss in Australia is estimated to be \$16.6 billion or \$28,905 per person with vision loss aged over 40.

In our region avoidable blindness and vision loss affects tens of millions of people, constrains economic growth and is both a cause and consequence of poverty.

- 90 per cent of people who are blind or vision impaired live in developing countries with two-thirds living in our region.
- Women and girls make up 64 per cent of all people who are blind or vision impaired and women remain less likely to access eye health and vision care services in many countries. This perpetuates the cycle of disempowerment, ensuring that poverty and disability remain disproportionately gender-biased.
- One in five of the world's poorest people live with a disability. Without adequate healthcare services that cater for people living with disability in socio-economic disadvantage, diseases, including eye disease, can perpetuate a cycle of social exclusion and poverty.

The good news

Fortunately, we already know what works, what is cost-effective and what needs to be done for significant progress to be made in the elimination of avoidable blindness and the full participation of people who are blind or vision impaired in the community.

- In Australia, 75 per cent of blindness and vision loss is preventable or treatable if it is detected early enough.
- Among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, 94 per cent of vision loss is preventable or treatable.
- With the right supports and services, people with unavoidable blindness and vision impairment can remain independent, engaged in their communities and live the life they choose.
- Globally, 80 per cent of all vision loss is preventable or treatable, with interventions to improve or restore sight among the most cost-effective of all healthcare interventions returning \$4 for every \$1 invested.

- Since 1990, prevalence rates of avoidable blindness have reduced by 40 per cent in our region in spite of an ageing and overall population increase of 23 per cent; demonstrating the direct impact of avoidable blindness programs.

Successive governments have taken positive steps for the eye health and vision care of Australians, but there is still much to be done. In recent times, Australia has also shown great leadership in our region to reduce avoidable blindness and the time is right to resume the mantle and leverage off the progress made. Working in partnership towards 2020 is about bringing together government, non-government, private sector, donors and community groups; enabling the development and achievement of a shared vision for eye health and vision care.

Policy priorities

Vision 2020 Australia is the national peak body for eye health and vision care working in partnership with members to eliminate avoidable blindness and achieve the full participation of people who are blind or vision impaired in the community. Vision 2020 Australia coordinates meaningful collaboration between the Australian Government and the sector and represents a diverse membership spanning: local and global eye care; health promotion; low vision support; vision rehabilitation; eye research; professional assistance and consumer groups.

This policy platform reflects the combined expertise of the eye health and vision care sector. It sets out a bold yet achievable plan of how working in partnership will reduce avoidable blindness at home and in our region, close the gap in Indigenous eye health and increase the community participation of people living with blindness and vision impairment. Priorities have been divided into national and global policy and are underpinned by key steps to build a sustainable future for eye health and vision care.

Summary of recommendations

Vision 2020 Australia calls for:

1

Development and implementation of a successor to the 2014-16 National Framework Implementation Plan with priorities, responsibilities and performance indicators for the Commonwealth and all states and territories until 2019.

2

Introduction of an integrated national health promotion program to prevent and treat avoidable blindness and vision loss in areas most at-risk across Australia at a cost of approximately \$20.1 million over four years.

3

Introduction of a diabetes blindness prevention program to ensure systematic early detection, early intervention and e-health optimised coordination.

4

Development and implementation of integration guidelines between health, aged care, disability and education to improve continuity of services and support for all people who are blind or vision impaired.

5

Immediate lifting of the Medicare indexation freeze for ophthalmology and optometry services.

6

Extension of the bulk-billing incentive program to optometry services.

7

Vision 2020 Australia calls for the full implementation of the Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision under the new National Framework Implementation Plan. Immediate priority is to commit to outstanding recommendations contained within the Vision 2020 Australia Joint Sector Funding Proposal 2015 at a cost of \$13 million over four years.

8

Ongoing funding post 2017 of the Commonwealth trachoma program and the National Trachoma Surveillance Reporting Unit of approximately \$17.2 million over four years. Additional policy and funding commitments across Commonwealth, state and territory governments are also essential to significantly improve housing and environmental conditions to ensure trachoma is eliminated in accordance with Australia's GET2020 obligations.

9

Inclusion of specialist assessment and adequately funded service pathways within My Aged Care that meet the functional needs of older Australians who are blind or vision impaired to support ageing in place, maximise choice and control, and reduce or delay unnecessary entrance into residential care.

10

Ensuring National Disability Insurance Scheme eligibility, within the Act and National Disability Insurance Agency operational guidelines, is adequately funded to meet the needs of people who are blind or vision impaired across all life stages.

11

Maintaining Australia's leadership role in reducing avoidable blindness in the Indo-Pacific region by supporting facilitated sector-wide collaboration activities led by Vision 2020 Australia, the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness and Australian-based and local stakeholders.

12

Supporting sector-wide eye health coordination and strategic health system strengthening initiatives in Cambodia, Papua New Guinea and Vietnam with an investment of \$18.5 million over four years.

13

Commitment to annual funding equivalent to the 2015-16 budget allocation for the life of the Development for All strategy to 2020 and an investment of five per cent of the aid budget to mainstream disability-inclusion across all aid investments.

14

Establishment of an implementation plan for the Sustainable Development Goals and for oversight of the implementation plan to be positioned within the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

15

Continued leadership by the Australian Government on the international stage with a commitment to supporting and actively participating in the development of the post-2019 World Health Organisation agenda to promote universal eye health.

National policy

A National Framework Implementation Plan for all Australia

In 2005, the *National Framework for Action to Promote Eye Health and Prevent Avoidable Blindness and Vision Loss* (the National Framework) was endorsed by all Australian Health Ministers. In 2014, the Australian Government took the next crucial step and endorsed the *Implementation Plan under the National Framework for Action to Promote Eye Health and Prevent Avoidable Blindness and Vision Loss* (NFIP) to strengthen Australia's efforts to improve eye health and vision care and contribute to achieving the goals outlined in the World Health Organisation's *Universal Eye Health: a Global Action Plan 2014-19* (Global Action Plan).

The NFIP outlines Commonwealth responsibilities for eye health and vision care, nominating three key priority areas: Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander eye health; preventing eye disease associated with chronic conditions (particularly diabetes); and improving the evidence base. This marks a significant milestone towards establishing a national integrated plan for eye health and vision care. However, the current NFIP is limited to Commonwealth responsibilities and does not include the role of states and territories.

A nationally consistent and cohesive implementation plan which outlines priorities, responsibilities and performance indicators for the Commonwealth and all states and territories, will achieve effective and efficient service delivery and improved eye health outcomes. Ultimately, this will ensure progress toward the 25 per cent reduction in the prevalence of blindness and vision loss committed to under the Global Action Plan by 2019.

Recommendation 1

Vision 2020 Australia calls for the development and implementation of a successor to the 2014-16 National Framework Implementation Plan with priorities, responsibilities and performance indicators for the Commonwealth and all states and territories until 2019.

A national health promotion program to target areas most at-risk of chronic eye conditions

In Australia, around 80 per cent of all blindness and vision loss is attributed to just five conditions: age-related macular degeneration; cataract; diabetic retinopathy; glaucoma; and uncorrected refractive error. These five conditions have an estimated total annual cost to the Australian economy of more than \$16 billion. Further, in 2009, direct and indirect economic costs of vision loss in Victoria alone were estimated to be \$4.2 billion annually (informal care and support, aids and equipment, additional costs to primary health system, productivity losses, carer opportunity costs, home modifications and health system costs). Evidence shows that a five per cent reduction in the prevalence of vision loss could save Victoria \$210 million annually in direct and indirect costs.

The sobering fact is all of these conditions can be prevented or treated to reverse, stop or slow the progress of vision loss in the majority of cases, if detected early. Given the extent of the functional impact, intensity of ongoing care and often long-term and recurrent cost for monitoring and treatment, these conditions must be recognised as chronic conditions in their own right and direct action is required to reduce the adverse impact on individuals and the community.

Vision 2020 Australia considers that a new NFIP should include the introduction of an integrated health promotion program across Australia to target at-risk groups and prevent avoidable blindness and vision loss and ensure early detection and treatment for these chronic eye conditions. A national eye health promotion program should target Primary Health Networks (PHNs) most at-risk as PHNs with their mandate to strengthen local health systems would be most appropriate for national scale rollout of the program.

Using publically available data, preliminary analysis shows that at least 75 Local Government Areas (LGAs) within various PHNs across Australia are in need of a targeted eye health prevention strategy. This analysis takes into account LGAs with populations of people over 40 years of age and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people which are higher than the national average, coupled with a high diabetes prevalence (more detailed analysis is required to further map these LGAs against PHN boundaries).

Vision 2020 Australia recommends that a first phase of the program be rolled out in a minimum of four LGAs in each state and territory over the next four years based on the successful Victorian Vision Initiative model currently being implemented. Excluding Victoria, the program would require an initial investment from both Commonwealth and state and territory governments of approximately \$20.1 million over four years.

Recommendation 2

Vision 2020 Australia calls for the introduction of an integrated national health promotion program to prevent and treat avoidable blindness and vision loss in areas most at-risk across Australia at a cost of approximately \$20.1 million over four years.



Mark Chew

Introducing an innovative diabetes blindness prevention program

At present approximately 1.7 million Australians are estimated to be living with diabetes and with an additional 280 people developing diabetes every day this figure is estimated to grow to 2.45 million by 2030. Diabetic retinopathy is currently a leading cause of vision loss and blindness in working-age Australians and a major cause of vision loss among older Australians. With one million Australians projected to be living with blindness or vision loss by 2020, a significant proportion will be due to the epidemic growth of diabetes and diabetic retinopathy.

The current approach to eye examinations for Australians with diabetes is not systematic and according to Medicare data, 80 per cent of Indigenous and 50 per cent of non-Indigenous Australians with diabetes do not have an eye check at the frequency recommended by the National Health and Medical Research Council. Diabetic eye disease is often asymptomatic until it reaches an advanced stage and outcomes of late treatment are usually inferior to early intervention.

Evidence shows that early detection and timely treatment can prevent the majority of diabetes-related vision loss. The implementation of systematic retinal photography programs in the United Kingdom, Iceland, Poland and Sweden has dramatically decreased the incidence of blindness from diabetes.

Vision 2020 Australia, working with experts from the diabetes, eye health and vision care sectors proposes the introduction of an innovative approach to reduce vision loss from eye disease due to diabetes in the Australian population through systematic early detection, early intervention and e-health optimised coordination. The proposed program seeks to work with the development of the new My Health Record to utilise and leverage the capabilities of existing databases to facilitate linking, storing and sharing information between databases, Primary Health Networks, eye health practitioners, general practitioners, specialist diabetes clinicians, other health services and putting consumers in control of their information and at the centre of care.

Recommendation 3

Vision 2020 Australia calls for the introduction of a diabetes blindness prevention program to ensure systematic early detection, early intervention and e-health optimised coordination.

Continuity of services and support across health, aged care, disability and education

People who are blind or have a vision impairment that cannot be corrected or treated are an important part of the community and their needs must be addressed by Federal and state/territory governments. Supporting people who are blind or vision impaired to get an education, get a job or get a better one, remain connected to their families and communities and generally participating in life in the manner in which they choose are basic human rights and essential for building a prosperous, happy society.

With specialist supports and services, people who are blind or vision impaired can become or remain independent with the freedom to participate fully in the community. It is essential that these services and supports are planned carefully to make sure no one falls through the cracks. Gaps in the system within and across health, aged care, disability and education make the system inefficient and ineffective, but most importantly, adversely impact on people's lives and wellbeing. Gaps such as the cut-off at age 65 for eligibility to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), the lack of uniform blindness-specific expertise and peer support for applicants

navigating both the NDIS and My Aged Care, the hit-and-miss of adequate referrals by health professionals to blindness services and the inadequate provision of adaptive technology for children in school and at home, often result in isolation, discrimination and poor life outcomes for tens of thousands of people across Australia.

The new NFIP must build on the potential future investment indicated within the current NFIP 2014-16 and include specific measures to ensure better integration across health, aged care, disability and education for people who are blind or vision impaired. The development and implementation of clear integration guidelines between health, My Aged Care, the NDIS and education will help to promote a collaborative culture across government agencies, close service gaps, support cooperation with the non-government and private sectors and provide consumers with certainty about how they move in and out of these four systems throughout their life. Integration principles will also directly support informing government policy within each department to respond to the needs of consumers; making for a more efficient and effective overall system to maximise human potential and community engagement.

Recommendation 4

Vision 2020 Australia calls for the development and implementation of integration guidelines between health, aged care, disability and education to improve continuity of services and support for all people who are blind or vision impaired.

Sustainability of Medicare-supported optometry and ophthalmology

Critical to the capacity of eye health and vision care services within the health system is the sustainability of optometry and ophthalmology services. Optometrists provide the frontline of eye care prevention, treatment and referral to specialist services and ophthalmologists provide diagnostic, treatment and preventative medical services related to diseases, injuries and deficiencies of the eye. Ensuring optometry and ophthalmology services are geographically representative of the Australian population and the system supports ready, affordable access to needed care for patients, requires a strong commitment to the principle of universal health coverage to which Australia is internationally known.

The current freeze on Medicare indexation is already having an impact on consumer access to optometry and ophthalmology and this impact will worsen as the economy continues on a path of at least 2 per cent annual growth. With the indexation freeze, compounded in the case of optometry by a 5 per cent reduction in the

patient rebate since 1 January 2015, the patient rebate continues to move further and further away from the real cost of providing clinical eye care. There is a risk that in areas with high levels of social disadvantage where most patients can only access bulk-billed services, continuing to provide these services will soon be unsustainable. The hardest hit will be people from a lower socio-economic background, often also the same people more at-risk of developing vision loss.

Vision 2020 Australia considers it is therefore critical that the indexation freeze on Medicare rebate for optometry and ophthalmology services is lifted as soon as possible. Further, a safety net ought to be provided for the Medicare Rebate reduction for optometry services with the extension of the bulk-billing incentive program to optometry services. The extension of this program to optometric services will mean optometrists will receive an incentive payment to bulk-bill Commonwealth Concession Card holders and children less than 16 years of age. These two measures will support the sustainability of front-line and specialist eye health and vision care services and maintain the principle of universal health coverage for all Australians.

Recommendation 5

Vision 2020 Australia calls for the immediate lifting of the Medicare indexation freeze for ophthalmology and optometry services.

Recommendation 6

Vision 2020 Australia calls for the extension of the bulk-billing incentive program to optometry services.

Closing the gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye health and vision care

In April 2015, Vision 2020 Australia submitted a joint sector funding proposal containing eight key recommendations essential to close the gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye health and vision care. The funding proposal was aligned to the University of Melbourne's Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision (the Roadmap) and sought to progress the corresponding key priorities identified within the NFIP.

In September 2015, the Australian Government committed to supporting a phased approach beginning with recommendations relating to eye health systems coordination, national oversight reporting and trachoma health promotion. However, recommendations related to increased funding for outreach optometry and ophthalmology services, on-the-ground service coordination and access to low cost spectacles remain outstanding.

Vision 2020 Australia considers that this first phase will directly inform the scope and quantum of the remaining recommendations; however seeks a commitment to implementing the outstanding key priorities in a second phase under a new NFIP at an estimated cost of \$13 million over four years.

Priority areas include:

- additional funding for the Visiting Optometrists Scheme for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- additional funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ophthalmology outreach services (including surgical services)
- additional funding to support on-the-ground eye health service coordination
- a nationally consistent approach for improving access to prescription glasses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

A commitment to the full implementation of the Roadmap in the next NFIP is critical to ensuring positive eye health and vision care outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Working to achieve this, support from the Australian Government to implement the remaining recommendations of the funding proposal is essential for ensuring the eye health and vision care system is as effective and efficient as possible.

Recommendation 7

Vision 2020 Australia calls for the full implementation of the Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision under the new National Framework Implementation Plan. Immediate priority is to commit to outstanding recommendations contained within the Vision 2020 Australia Joint Sector Funding Proposal 2015 at a cost of \$13 million over four years.

Eliminating trachoma by 2020

Trachoma is a major blinding infectious eye disease occurring in 60 per cent of outback communities and affecting 1.4 per cent of older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the country. The World Health Organisation's (WHO) *SAFE* (surgery, antibiotics, facial cleanliness, environmental improvements) *Strategy* is designed to prevent, treat and eliminate trachoma; and Australia, alongside WHO and its partners, has committed to the Alliance for Global Elimination of Trachoma by the year 2020 (GET2020).

To date, Australia has made good progress in reducing the rates of trachoma, but more work is required to achieve its elimination by 2020. The current Commonwealth funding commitment for trachoma extends to 2017; however a continued commitment of ongoing funding for 2017-21 of approximately \$17.2 million to implement the *SAFE Strategy* is critical to safeguard the ongoing work of the trachoma program and ensure the disease is eliminated.

Integral to the elimination of diseases such as trachoma are healthy and safe homes and community living environments. This can be achieved through embedding the *Housing for Health* methodology in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing policy and ensuring the integration of this methodology within and across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander environmental, housing and public health policy at both the Federal and state/territory levels.

Finally, ongoing support for the National Trachoma Surveillance Reporting Unit (NTSRU) to report on implementation of all components of the *SAFE Strategy*, including the environmental component, is also critical.

Recommendation 8

Vision 2020 Australia calls for the ongoing funding post 2017 of the Commonwealth trachoma program and the National Trachoma Surveillance Reporting Unit of approximately \$17.2 million over four years. Additional policy and funding commitments across Federal, state and territory governments are also essential to significantly improve housing and environmental conditions to ensure trachoma is eliminated in accordance with Australia's GET2020 obligations.



The Fred Hollows Foundation

Ensuring people who are blind or vision impaired remain independent and participating in their community

Equal access to services for older Australians who are blind or vision impaired

Australians who have contributed to making Australia the fifth wealthiest economy in the world on a per capita basis throughout their working lives find themselves being left out when it comes to services and supports related to their blindness and vision impairment later in life. While the incidence of vision loss increases with an ageing population, people over the age of 65 who are blind or vision impaired have traditionally missed out on government funded services and supports in a manner equal to their younger counterparts and this inequity is only set to worsen as the NDIS rolls out around the country.

The My Aged Care reforms for Home Care and Home Support are focused on preventing or delaying entrance into high cost residential care. While this is an aim widely supported, the resulting eligibility for services has an over emphasis on frailty. This creates a barrier to

accessing necessary services for people who are blind or vision impaired as they are often not frail, despite requiring support related to their blindness and vision impairment to remain independent. It is also often the case that individuals with frailty-related comorbidities only have enough support to cover the frailty related supports, with the blindness-related supports like assistive technology for reading and writing, orientation and mobility or occupational therapy, not being covered due to package limits.

My Aged Care must be adjusted to both ensure that people who identify as seeking supports related to their blindness or vision impairment have access to a holistic specialist assessment undertaken by an expert in blindness and vision impairment, access to peer advice and that a clear service pathway with adequate funding is available to meet the functional support needs of consumers both within the home and residential care.

Recommendation 9

Vision 2020 Australia calls for the inclusion of specialist assessment and adequately funded service pathways within My Aged Care that meet the functional needs of older Australians who are blind or vision impaired to support ageing in place, maximise choice and control, and reduce or delay unnecessary entrance into residential care.

Making sure the NDIS works for people who are blind or vision impaired

In putting choice and control directly into the hands of consumers, the NDIS will ensure people with disability receive the right support to achieve the goals and aspirations that they themselves want to achieve. In order for the NDIS to work for people who are blind or vision impaired, it is critical that eligibility with the NDIS Act remains focused on enabling access at the earliest opportunity to the scheme to ensure the recognised benefits of early intervention are achieved and effect optimum outcomes across all life stages.

Additionally, operational guidelines used by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) to determine support packages must be adequately defined, through obtaining specialist advice, to ensure timely access to the services and

supports required by people who are blind or vision impaired across all life stages. Of particular note, children who are blind or vision impaired must have access to NDIS-funded support for items such as adaptive technology and aids and equipment that are both used in education and also at home. Ensuring applicants and participants have access to advocacy services and all consumers have access to information and peer support to ensure informed choice, is also essential.

The NDIS must also properly fund and provide supports through the Information, Linkages and Capacity stream for services where there are thin markets or for those services that cannot be reasonably included in an individual support package, such as library and information services, adaptive technology help desk and volunteer coordination.

Recommendation 10

Vision 2020 Australia calls for ensuring National Disability Insurance Scheme eligibility within the Act and National Disability Insurance Agency operational guidelines is adequately funded and administered to meet the needs of people who are blind or vision impaired across all life stages.



Global policy

Supporting facilitated collaboration in the region

Successive Australian governments have recognised the value of eye health programs in providing cost-effective and practical solutions to improving living standards and fostering economic growth, particularly for countries in the Indo-Pacific region. In 2014, the Australian Government played a critical role in securing global endorsement and subsequent investment in the global targets to reduce avoidable blindness and vision loss by 25 per cent by 2019 within the Global Action Plan.

Since 1999, blindness prevalence has significantly decreased in the Indo-Pacific region, with a 38.5 per cent reduction in the Pacific and a 43 per cent reduction in Southeast Asia. This is remarkable given there has been a 23 per cent increase in population across the region within the same period. These results highlight the significance of Australian investment to coordinate global engagement in blindness prevention through the coordinated efforts of the Vision 2020 Australia Global Consortium. Further impact on the prevalence of blindness in the region through the Australian Government's ongoing leadership and investment cannot be underestimated.

In light of the recent reductions to Australia's foreign aid contributions, Vision 2020 Australia members and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) are focusing their combined efforts to improve stakeholder collaboration in-country. These efforts seek to strengthen regional and national level eye health engagement across all stakeholders through improved mechanisms for coordination and collaboration. Australian leadership to support these efforts to maintain momentum toward achieving the global targets particularly in the Indo-Pacific region continues to be critical.

Vision 2020 Australia considers the following to be priority collaborative actions:

- **Inclusiveness:** People living with disability make up 15 per cent of the global population accounting for approximately one in five of the world's poorest people. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by disability and exclusion, representing 64 per cent of the world's blind and vision impaired. It is also the case that 19 million children globally are blind or vision impaired. Proudly, Australia is renowned as a global leader in disability-inclusive development, and the empowerment of women and girls, throughout the region. There is now a real opportunity for the Australian Government to leverage off this leadership and work with the sector to ensure equitable access to eye health and vision care services and opportunities across the region.
- **Integration with broader health systems:** Working with eye health technical bodies to strengthen their advocacy skills to work with national health bodies (such as Ministries of Health) for increasing allocations to eye health in national health budgets, staffing and career development allocations, and ongoing support for national prevention of blindness strategies.
- **Stakeholder engagement and coordination:** Building on existing coordination mechanisms Vision 2020 Australia and the IAPB will facilitate an increase in nationally led collaborative action and expand coordination to non-traditional eye health and development stakeholders including the private sector, donors and tertiary institutions.



Royal Australasian College of Surgeons

Recommendation 11

Vision 2020 Australia calls for maintaining Australia's leadership role in reducing avoidable blindness in the Indo-Pacific region by supporting facilitated sector-wide collaboration activities led by Vision 2020 Australia, the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness and Australian-based and local stakeholders.

Strengthening health systems in Papua New Guinea, Vietnam and Cambodia

Vision 2020 Australia members estimate that an investment of \$45.2 million over four years (2015-19) is necessary to maintain the significant momentum toward achieving the

Global Action Plan across ten countries in the Indo-Pacific region. However, in consideration of the reductions to the Australian Government's aid budget, Vision 2020 Australia members have identified three priority countries to focus efforts for driving collaborative action and sector stakeholder coordination. All three countries have benefited from Australian investment in eye health, have a strong stakeholder base and potential for significant impact through collaborative actions, despite receiving reduced resources from the Australian Government.

Recommendation 12

Vision 2020 Australia calls for supporting sector-wide eye health coordination and strategic health system strengthening initiatives in Cambodia, Papua New Guinea and Vietnam with an investment of \$18.5 million over four years.

Achieving disability inclusive development

Since the launch of *Development for All 2015-2020: Strategy for strengthening disability inclusive development in Australia's aid program* (the Development for All strategy), the Australian Government continues to be a global leader in disability-inclusive development. With one in five of the world's poorest people living with disability, it is vital to remove the social, physical, legislative and communication barriers to accessing services, including eye health and vision care.

Vision 2020 Australia is committed to disability-inclusive development and believes in the importance of people with disability contributing to and benefiting from all development programs. A proactive focus on disability inclusion will help to break the cycle of poverty and disability. Establishing counselling and support

services, developing referral pathways, training health care practitioners, building accessible infrastructure, raising awareness, and collecting data disaggregated by disability - in consultation with people with disability - helps to ensure that all eye health and vision care programs are accessible to everyone.

Vision 2020 Australia understands that to effectively reach and improve the lives of the poorest of the poor, all efforts must be made to ensure people with disability are included in and benefit from eye health programs, and therefore calls on the Australian Government to continue its leadership role in disability-inclusive development throughout the region. An annual funding commitment at least equal to the 2015-16 allocation of \$12.9 million should also be extended for the life of the Development for All strategy until 2020, and an investment of five per cent of the aid budget should be made to mainstreaming disability-inclusion across all aid investments.

Recommendation 13

Vision 2020 Australia calls for a commitment to annual funding equivalent to the 2015-16 budget allocation for the life of Development for All strategy to 2020, and an investment of five per cent of the aid budget to mainstream disability-inclusion across all aid investments.

Building a sustainable future for eye health and vision care

Making the Sustainable Development Goals a reality

The Australian Government's support for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) marks a significant commitment from the Government to transform Australia's approach to development and strengthen our commitment to equality both in Australia and the region. Vision 2020 Australia supports the SDGs and believes the goals, targets and performance indicators provide an important policy platform for the Australian Government across the spectrum of eye health and vision care, both domestically and internationally.

Preventing avoidable blindness and vision impairment has an essential role in ensuring sustainable economic growth and poverty alleviation and in promoting Australia's own national interests. Together with the full social and economic inclusion of people who are blind or vision impaired, preventing avoidable blindness must be a central feature of all development efforts seeking to achieve the ambitious targets of the SDGs domestically and through Australian aid.

Vision 2020 Australia supports the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) in calling on the Australian Government to establish an implementation plan for the Sustainable Development Goals and for oversight of the implementation plan to be positioned within the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

The SDG implementation plan should:

- Determine the high level indicator framework to which Australia will measure progress against the SDG goals and targets and for indicators to include cataract surgical coverage and neglected tropical diseases (such as trachoma).
- Ensure that data is disaggregated by key dimensions within each indicator area, including by disability and gender.
- Ensure that reporting against the performance framework occurs annually.
- Ensure that the process for monitoring and reporting is transparent enabling accountability by civil society, including the eye health and vision care sector.

Recommendation 14

Vision 2020 Australia calls for the establishment of an implementation plan for the Sustainable Development Goals and for oversight of the implementation plan to be positioned within the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Building on success: working towards the next Global Action Plan

Successive international attention to preventing avoidable blindness and vision loss through the World Health Organisation has been critical to the success of the 40 per cent reduction in avoidable blindness in the Indo-Pacific region in recent years. The current Global Action Plan has created renewed momentum by Member States and demonstrates how having a strong, measurable and achievable set of global objectives, targets and indicators can have a real impact in the lives of millions of people around the world. Through a continued commitment to working in partnership by national governments, NGOs, donors, private business and the community, the global target of a 25 per cent reduction in avoidable blindness by 2019 can be achieved.

Within the life of the 45th Australian Parliament, the World Health Assembly will need to consider and develop the next Global Action Plan to promote universal eye health and to build on the success of efforts currently being undertaken. Australia, with its good name, reputation and influence in eye health and vision care around the world, will need to continue its leadership during the development of the next Global Action Plan to ensure it is as robust, inclusive and as visionary as the current plan.

Recommendation 15

Vision 2020 Australia calls for continued leadership by the Australian Government on the international stage with a commitment to supporting and actively participating in the development of the post-2019 World Health Organisation agenda to promote universal eye health.





Vision 2020 Australia

Level 2, 174 Queen Street
Melbourne Victoria 3000

Telephone +61 3 9656 2020

Facsimile +61 3 9656 2040

Website www.vision2020australia.org.au

National body working in partnership to prevent avoidable blindness and
improve vision care

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