

Media Release



VISION 2020 URGES NEW PARLIAMENT TO PRIORITISE EYE CARE REFORM

Monday, 23 May 2022

Australia's peak eye health body Vision 2020 Australia is calling on the incoming Labor government and the large crossbench to prioritise equitable and high-quality eye-care access for all Australians immediately.

Welcoming the new federal Labor government and Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, Vision 2020 Australia CEO Patricia Sparrow said the new parliament presented opportunities for positive change.

"Vision 2020 Australia congratulates the incoming Labor government and is looking forward to working with them, as well as the large crossbench, to deliver on eye care reform for all Australians and ensure that quality services to support people who are blind or have low vision are available when they are needed," said Vision 2020 Australia CEO Patricia Sparrow.

"Since its inception, Vision 2020 Australia has been working to ensure that people who are blind or have low vision can live independently and actively participate in their communities without any barriers.

"In Australia, 90 per cent of blindness and vision loss is preventable or treatable if detected early enough. But we're way overdue on policy action to ensure early detection and treatment is available equitably for all Australians."

Vision 2020 Australia is calling on the newly elected federal Labor government and the entire parliament to:

- Provide an additional \$65 million to meet the Australian Government commitment to ending avoidable blindness in Indigenous communities by 2025, through full implementation of the Strong Eyes, Strong Communities recommendations.
- Introduce packages for children with vision loss entering the NDIS, similar to those which already exist for children with hearing loss.
- Adopt a National Framework for children's vision screening to ensure all children have their eyes screened prior to starting school.
- Amend the Broadcasting Services Act to legally require the provision of Audio Description on free-to-air TV.
- Deliver on the election promise to provide \$5 million in foreign aid to strengthen regional health preparedness in Pacific Island countries and Timor-Leste that can help tackle the blindness crisis in PNG

- Fund ophthalmology staff specialist positions in the public system and develop new and innovative eye health workforce strategies that improve access to, and the timeliness of, cataract surgery and intravitreal injections in regional, rural and remote Australia.
- Implement the Expanded Core Curriculum nationally for students who are blind or have low vision and require universities to comply with accessible information and communications technology (ICT) procurement standards.

The full list of Vision 2020's asks can be found here: <https://bit.ly/3LECxAe>

“Currently, vision loss costs the Australian economy \$27.6 bn annually. Recent estimates indicate that by 2050, 1 in 2 Australians will require eye care services and the economic costs are about to compound.

“Additionally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are disproportionately impacted and experience vision loss at three times the rate of other Australians, accounting for 11% of the health gap.

“The time to enact policies that ensure prevention and timely treatment are available for all Australians and that people who are blind or have low vision can get the services they need has well and truly arrived.

“We urge the Albanese government to put eye health and support for people who are blind or have low vision on the top of its first term agenda.”

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About Vision 2020 Australia

Vision 2020 Australia is the national peak body working in partnership to prevent avoidable blindness and improve vision care in Australia and our region. We represent around 45 member organisations involved in local and global eye health and vision care, health promotion, low vision support, vision rehabilitation, eye research, professional assistance and community support.

www.vision2020australia.org.au