

SETTING AUSTRALIA'S SIGHTS 2022

Key priorities for the Eye Health and Vision Care sector

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Key priorities for the Eye Health and Vision Care sector

In Australia, 90 per cent of blindness and vision loss is preventable or treatable if detected early enough[1]. Despite this, many Australians continue to experience avoidable vision loss due to conditions such as cataract and diabetic eye disease, that could easily be prevented through early detection and cost-effective treatment.

Recent estimates indicate that by 2050, 1 in 2 Australian's will require eye care services.

Currently there are 453,000 Australian's who are blind or vision impaired. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are disproportionally impacted, experiencing blindness and vision loss at three times the rate of other Australians, accounting for 11% of the health gap.

This has significant social and economic costs, with recent data indicating vision loss costs the Australian economy $27.6 billion annually or $46,950 per person with vision loss aged over 40[4].

With the right support and services, people with unavoidable blindness and vision impairment can remain independent, engaged in their communities, and live the life they choose.

Australia is a global leader in eye health and vision care, championing the 2020 World Health Assembly resolution to end avoidable blindness[5] and the development of global eye health targets, and co-sponsoring the United Nations resolution Vision for Everyone[6]. Australia can action these commitments by working in partnership with the eye health and vision care sector to tackle high levels of vision loss in our region and ensure those with disabilities are not left behind.

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[1] Vision 2020 and Centre for Eye Research Australia, 2016, The National Eye Health Survey 2016.
[2] Taylor HR, National Indigenous Eye Health Survey Team, National Indigenous Eye Health Survey: Minum Barreng (Tracking Eyes), Melbourne: Indigenous Eye Health Unit, The University of Melbourne, 2009.
[3] This estimate is based on the prevalence of the 5 most common causes of vision loss (cataract, uncorrected refractive error, diabetic retinopathy, aged related macular disease and glaucoma).
[4] Access Economics, 2010, *Clear Focus: The Economic Impact of Vision Loss in Australia in 2009: A Report prepared for Vision 2020 Australia,* Melbourne updated to 2021 dollar values by Health Consult, September 2021.
[5] World Health Organisation Seventy-Third World Health Assembly 2020, *Integrated people-centred eye care, including preventable vision impairment and blindness*, https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA73/A73_R4-en.pdf
[6] United Nations General Assembly 2021, *Vision for Everyone: accelerating action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals,* https://www.undocs.org/en/A/75/L.108

This federal election the eye health and vision care sector is calling on the Australian Government 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.
- Invest $26.4 million over 4 years to tackle the blindness crisis in Papua New Guinea.
- Provide an additional $14 million per annum for disability inclusion in Australia's aid program to ensure people living with disability are not left behind.
- Invest $5.04 million over 4 years to trial a just-in-time online or phone coaching service and develop online resources for disability and aged care workers and assessors.
- Fund a national, harmonised scheme to provide Assistive Technology to older Australians with disabilities including vision loss
- Introduce packages for children with vision loss entering the NDIS, similar to those which already exist for children with hearing loss.
- Amend the Broadcasting Services Act to legally require the provision of Audio Description on free-to-air TV.
- Establish a dedicated vision mission within the Medical Research Future Fund of $150 million over 10 years.
- Fund ophthalmology staff specialist positions in the public system and develop new and innovative eye health workforce strategies that improve access to cataract surgery and intravitreal injections in regional, rural and remote Australia.
- Adopt a National Framework for children's vision screening to ensure all children have their eyes screened prior to starting school.
- 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.

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About Vision 2020 Australia:

Vision 2020 Australia is the national peak body for the eye health and vision care sector, representing 50 member organisations involved in local and global eye health. Vision 2020 Australia works in partnership with members and governments to eliminate avoidable blindness and achieve the full participation of people who are blind or vision impaired in the community.

End avoidable blindness in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities



Invest an additional $65 million to meet the Australian Government commitment to ending avoidable blindness in Indigenous communities by by 2025.

The Australian Government has committed to ending avoidable blindness in Indigenous communities by 2025[1]. Despite this, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People continue to experience blindness and vision loss at three times the rate of other Australians.

Strong Eyes, Strong Communities – a five year plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health and Vision 2019-2024[2] sets out a concrete plan of action to take this commitment forward. Critically, the plan's actions and approach also align strongly to the principles and directions set out in the *National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap 2020*.

While Government has taken action on some recommendations, there are still a number that require immediate Government support if we are to meet the target goal of closing the gap in vision by 2025.

With further investment *Strong Eyes, Strong Communities* can deliver more than 183,000 required additional outreach services over the 2021-2025 period as well as other activities to build sustainable, community led locally-responsive eye care into the future.

By combining the expertise, resources and commitment of community-controlled organisations, the eye sector and Government, we can achieve integrated models of healthcare that will enhance eye care delivery. Honouring the Government's commitment to ending avoidable blindness in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and closing the gap in vision.

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[1] Australia's National Long Term Health Plan (2019), p7 https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/australia-s-long-term-national-health-plan_0.pdf
[2] Vision 2020 Australia 2019, Strong Eyes, strong communities, https://www.vision2020australia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Strong-Eyes-Strong-Communities-A-five-year-plan-for-Aboriginal-and-Torres-Strait-Islander-eye-health-and-vision-2019-2024.pdf

Tackling the blindness crisis in PNG



Invest $26.4 million over 4 years to tackle the blindness crisis in PNG

Papua New Guinea (PNG) has one of the highest rates of blindness in the world with an estimated 860,000 people with vision loss – 61% of whom are women.

The main causes are:

- Untreated cataracts which can be removed with low cost, sight saving surgery;
- Uncorrected refractive error which can be corrected with the right pair of glasses (which two out of three people do not have access to); and
- a high rate of poorly managed diabetes, leading to diabetic retinopathy, which if left untreated will lead to severe vision loss or blindness. This is preventable through early detection and treatment.

Vision impairment or blindness has a direct impact on a person's ability to engage in work, education, self-care, and development – undermining efforts to engage in social and economic mobility. Investing in proven and cost-effective interventions to prevent and treat blindness, such as cataract surgery, opens the door to opportunity and prosperity and reduces the disabling impact of impairment.

In line with our development partnership with PNG, Australia should support the PNG healthcare system and its critical eye care services, disrupted through COVID19, to ensure that the 90% of vision loss that can be prevented and treated is.

This investment will develop the workforce and enhance remote service delivery to address the current burden of vision loss and prevent escalating rates of avoidable blindness due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The priority areas, identified by the PNG National Department of Health (and with an investment from the New Zealand Government of $16 million), include:

- **Immediate investment in remote service delivery** so that up to 160,000 people per year have their sight restored and can reach their full potential; and
- **The establishment of a sustainable purpose-built Centre of Excellence** to train 24 local ophthalmologists and 4 optometrists as well as ophthalmic clinicians, community health workers and existing staff. This means the good work undertaken immediately can be sustained over the long term.

This proposal will leverage the deep expertise, resources, and local connections of Vision 2020 Australia members. Strong bilateral relations with PNG, extensive sector knowledge and experience, coupled with reliable data about the current challenges means we know where the gaps in eye health are and already have some of the key underpinnings for success. We can hit the ground running and have an immediate and sustainable impact on vision loss in PNG when it is appropriate to do so.

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Increase the disability inclusion allocation in overseas development assistance



Provide an additional $14 million per annum for disability inclusion in Australia's aid program to ensure people living with disability are not left behind.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a catastrophic impact on people with disabilities, including those who are blind or vision impaired, who are more susceptible to contracting the virus and experience barriers in accessing information, health services, supports, livelihoods, and social protection measures.

This has widened inequalities, pushed people and their families deeper into poverty and increased the rate of death.

Since 2015, Australia has been a global leader in championing disability-inclusive development as a core component of its aid program and international engagement.

However, in the last two years there has been a drop in funding for disability inclusion in overseas development assistance. This financial year (2021-2022) alone, the budget has dropped 25% from $12.9 million to $9.6 million, at a time when people with disabilities are being pushed to the margins.

Dwindling resources for inclusion in the aid program is excluding people with disability from COVID-19 planning and recovery efforts.

To ensure this isn't a continuing trend, Vision 2020 Australia is calling on the Australian Government to increase the central disability allocation to a minimum of $14 million per annum, representing just 0.35% of Australia's total aid spend.

A proactive focus on disability inclusion will help to break the cycle of poverty and disability. Establishing rehabilitation 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.

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Eyes on Call: Informed support for people who are blind or have low vision



Invest $5.04 million over 4 years to trial a just-in-time online or phone coaching service and develop online resources for disability and aged care workers and assessors

Many people who acquire permanent vision loss have very little knowledge of the supports and training available that could allow them to remain independent and continue in many of the same activities they previously enjoyed.

The assessors who identify what supports people need, and the care workers who most frequently interact with them, are ideally placed to assist them, either by encouraging them to seek treatment, or connecting them to expert service providers and peer support.

One of the keys to improving outcomes for people with vision loss is educating and supporting the care workforce, which was identified as a priority in Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031.

Alongside existing resources and workforce training strategies, Vision 2020 Australia proposes the establishment of a complementary, 'just-in-time' response. Eyes on Call is an innovative, on-call eye health and vision coaching and support service for disability and aged care workers and assessors. The service will provide staff with phone and/or video call-based information and connect them to existing resources and training across the eye health and vision sector, with information and advice tailored to the specifics of the worker's query or client.

Eyes on Call would span areas such as common eye conditions, signs and symptoms, and how to minimise their impact, as well as referral and management options and other training and development/resources that may help enhance the assessment and/or care. This would ensure the support provided is timely, informed and involves appropriate services and technology.

Under this proposal, Vision 2020 Australia would facilitate establishment of:

1. The Eyes on Call hotline that any aged care, disability support worker, or assessor could contact during standard business hours across Australia.
2. Referral of queries to eye sector organisations with specific expertise relevant to the worker's queries and/or location.
3. A follow up service for each call, to provide additional assistance and/or guidance and encourage skills enhancement in this important area.
4. Development and provision of information and other resources relevant to the worker (and if provided, their employer) regarding common eye conditions, key information relevant to the care context and contacts for sourcing local eye care services.
5. An evaluation project to quantify reach and impacts of the service.

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Assistive Technology for older Australians with vision loss



Fund a national, harmonised scheme to provide Assistive Technology to older Australians with disabilities including vision loss.

There are around 200,000 Australians over the age of 65 who are blind or have significant low vision. These people can often remain independent and continue living safely at home through the provision of a variety of Assistive Technology (AT).

For mild vision loss, relatively low-cost optical magnifiers can allow people to, for example, read medication labels, food expiry dates, and essential correspondence independently.

For more significant vision loss, use of specialised software to read screens, portable equipment that speaks printed material, and mobility aids can enable people who are blind or have low vision to safely leave their homes.

But currently, people outside the NDIS are missing out on this vital equipment, leading to higher risk of falls, hip fractures, and entry into residential care. This is because:

- The current Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) and residential care system settings don't provide sufficient funding for AT;
- Long waiting lists for Home Care packages often make them inefficient for delivering AT;
- The 65 state/territory based AT programs are difficult to navigate for both consumers and service providers and provide inconsistent levels of funding and equipment.

The introduction of AT in early vision loss significantly reduces the risk of adverse outcomes and is a good return of investment – with every dollar spent returning between $3.90 and $25.63[1].

Vision 2020 Australia welcomes the inclusion of the importance of people with disability being supported to access assistive technology in Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031. We add our voice to the **Assistive Technology for All** campaign and support the call for the introduction of a nationally consistent, harmonised scheme to deliver AT to people who are blind or have low vision. This would align with Recommendation 72 from the final report by the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety.

- Harmonise existing state-based AT programs and those operated by not-for-profit organisations;
- Be underpinned by an AT strategy, such as the one in place in the NDIS, which recognises the value of providing assistive technology to support and enhance a persons independence, and;
- Be driven by key performance indicators relating to the timely provision of assistive technology, in line with the aspirations of the NDIS Participant Service Guarantee.

The campaign is supported by more than 40 organisations representing people with disabilities in Australia.

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[1] Australian Healthcare Associates for the Australian Government Department of Health 2020, review-of-assistive-technology-programs-in-australia-final-report_0.pdf (health.gov.au)

Streamlined access for children with vision loss



Introduce packages for children with vision loss entering the NDIS, similar to those which already exist for children with hearing loss

Service providers contend that for children with vision loss, it's vital that supports be introduced as early as possible. Currently however, system settings for Early Childhood mean many children don't receive timely access to supports, because:

- Diagnostic criteria for vision loss are strict. Diagnosis can be difficult for vision conditions at an early age, and conditions which will lead to deterioration in vision are not easy to account for.
- The eligibility criteria of developmental delay can't easily be demonstrated in young children, meaning some families are asked to reapply when developmental delay is apparent;
- Knowledge regarding available vision supports and the ideal approach for children is inconsistent among NDIS planners and assessors.

The NDIA has collaborated with people who are Deaf or have hearing loss on developing a hearing pathway which ensures children with hearing loss get earlier access to vital supports as early as possible. This pathway:

1. Prioritises early intervention, and
2. Specifies "packages" of services and supports to be delivered, which have been agreed by experienced service providers.

Vision 2020 Australia calls for the NDIA to work with its members, which include service providers, clinicians and peer advocacy organisations, to deliver a similar arrangement for children who have vision loss.

This pathway will:

- Implement, as early as possible, a range of crucial supports, including occupational therapy, orientation and mobility training, and Assistive Technology,
- Aim to prevent, rather than address, developmental delay, and
- Align with Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 in ensuring children with disability can access and participate in high-quality early childhood education and care.

Securing audio description on Australian TV



Amend the Broadcasting Services Act to legally require the provision of Audio Description on free-to-air TV.

Audio Description is a service which provides information about on-screen content to people who are blind or have low vision, through a narration track which interjects between dialogue.

Access to Audio Description is about more than entertainment. If a person who is blind or has low vision can't enjoy the same programs as the rest of society, they are less likely to be included in conversation and community. Audio Description can provide potentially life-saving information which is usually only delivered as text (e.g. mental health hotlines, emergency information).

Article 30 of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability[1], to which Australia is a signatory, says that governments should recognise the right to "enjoy access to television programmes, films, theatre and other cultural activities, in accessible formats."

Vision 2020 Australia acknowledges the investment of $4 million in the 2020/21 financial year to help the ABC and SBS deliver Audio Description. But there is no legal requirement for any TV network to deliver any amount of described content – a requirement enforced in the US, UK, Canada and New Zealand. Amendment to the Broadcasting Services Act, similar to the legal mandate which has required provision of closed captions for people who are Deaf or hard of hearing since 1998, will be needed to require free to air TV to provide audio description.

This amendment would:

1. Require all free-to-air TV channels to provide a minimum amount of Audio Description per week. This amount would be set at:
   a) 14 hours per week in the first three years following implementation
   b) 21 hours per week in the fourth year following implementation and
   c) 28 hours per week from the fifth year following implementation.
2. Set quality standards for the provision of Audio Description, similar to those provided in the UK.
3. Require Audio Description that is broadcast on live television to also be available for on-demand or catch-up viewing.
4. Align with Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2023 in ensuring people with disability are able to fully participate in cultural life and information and communication systems are accessible, reliable and responsive.

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[1] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Article 30 – Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-30-participation-in-cultural-life-recreation-leisure-and-sport.html

Investment in Australian eye and vision research

Prevent avoidable vision loss and restore sight through the establishment of a dedicated vision mission within the Medical Research Future Fund of $150 million over 10 years.

Australia has some of the world's leading vision researchers undertaking cutting edge research to prevent avoidable vision loss and improve outcomes for people living with blindness or low vision. Research underway includes:

- The use of artificial intelligence to expand screening for eye disease;
- Ophthalmic testing to support the timely identification of chronic conditions such as dementia, cardiovascular and cerebrovascular disease;
- The application of genomics to enhance diagnosis and treatment; and
- Development of gene therapy and editing that can help restore sight both in Australia and abroad.

In addition to this, The Lancet Global Health Commission has described the connection between dementia, vision loss and other health issues impacting on older people. Local research is required to measure the extent of the impact on the Australian population.

Australian researchers are well placed to develop and deliver these pioneering treatments to prevent vision loss, restore sight and support people experiencing vision impairment or blindness.

While the development of new treatments and technologies is a win for individuals, investment in clinical trials and the translation of pre-clinical innovations is essential to keep Australia, and its researchers at the leading edge.

Vision loss costs the Australian economy $27 Billion per year[1]. By 2030, the number of people experiencing vision loss is predicted to exceed 1.04 million, an unacceptable figure given that 90% is preventable or treatable[2].

We have an opportunity to develop innovative technology to prevent the forecast growth in vision loss and deliver eye care services at greater scale. In doing so, we will improve quality of life for individuals, create jobs and dramatically reduce the economic cost of vision loss to the Australian public.

A recent impact report by the Ophthalmic Research Institute of Australia (ORIA) shows that for every $1 invested in eye health research there was a return of $10 (2009 figures[3]). Despite the returns to be gained, investment in eye health research is relatively low compared to that made in other areas of medical research.

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[1] Access Economics, 2010, Clear Focus: The Economic Impact of Vision Loss in Australia in 2009: A Report prepared for Vision 2020 Australia, Melbourne updated to 2021 dollar values by Health Consult, September 2021.
[2] Vision 2020 and Centre for Eye Research Australia, 2016, The National Eye Health Survey 2016.
[3] Ophthalmic Research Institute of Australia 2019, ORIA Research Funding & Impact, https://oria.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/ORIA-RESEARCH-IMPACT-REPORT-20191.pdf

Investment in Australian eye and vision research

Australia has committed to the improvement of eye health through its sponsorship of the World Health Assembly adoption of the World Report on Vision that calls for further investment in research.

Vision 2020 Australia has led the development of a sector wide research agenda that identifies ten priority areas for immediate investment (see table). This provides a framework for a dedicated vision mission within the Medical Research Future Fund. Creating a dedicated mission will accelerate sight saving treatment, enhance support and give life to Australia's commitment to further investment in research.

Ten point plan to enhance Australian vision research

Focus area	Examples of research questions
Vision science	How do we increase understanding of the function and biology of the visual system from eye to brain and apply this to improve patient care?
Vision for life	How can we reduce the effect of degenerative sight-threatening diseases on quality of life in an ageing population? How can we better support people living with a lifetime burden of eye disease?
Increase the effectiveness of treatment	What are the markers of early-stage disease and disease progression that can inform therapy?
Applying precision medicine to eye disease	How can we use newer individual person specific features to improve testing and diagnosis of sight-threatening diseases?
Pre-clinical & Clinical Trials	How do we use enhanced clinical trials capacity to improve patient care?
Prevention	How do we enhance and embed preventive activities to reduce avoidable vision loss, and strengthen the underlying evidence base?
Screening & early detection	How can we improve detection strategies for sight-threatening disease to identify and treat those at highest lifetime risk of blindness or vision loss?
Enhance service delivery	How can we improve access to and uptake of high-quality eye care services?
Meeting the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (Closing the Gap)	How do we achieve equity of eye health and vision outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and embed community leadership and control?
Improving Patient Journey	How do we better understand the impacts of eye and brain disease on vision and quality of life (including social and economic impacts) and manage these?

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Increase public access to sight saving eye care treatment



Fund ophthalmology staff specialist positions in the public system and develop new and innovative eye health workforce strategies that improve access to cataract surgery and intravitreal injections in regional, rural and remote Australia.

Cataract and macular diseases (such as age-related retinopathy and diabetic eye disease) are two of the leading causes of vision loss in Australia[1]. Fortunately, there are proven, cost effective treatments that can reverse or slow the loss of vision.

However, people who rely on the public health system currently experience significant barriers in accessing these treatments with:

- 74,000 people (of which 8,500 are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples) currently waiting for cataract surgery, and
- Few public health services providing ongoing, monthly intravitreal injections.

To prevent a lifetime of avoidable blindness Australian's need timely access to these services.

Timely access is good for the individual and for the economy, with interventions to improve or restore sight returning $4 for every $1 invested[2].

To address the barriers in accessing these treatments and ensure equity in sight saving treatment, Vision 2020 Australia recommends:

- Implementing a 90-day rule for cataract surgery, whereby patients are to be seen within 90 days of requesting an outpatient visit for assessment and operated on within 90 days of booking - and reporting of performance against this.
- An increase in publicly funded and/or affordable access to intravitreal injection[3] and benchmarks implemented that measure reach and timeliness. For this to be successful, mandated improvements are needed to the collection and reporting of outpatient/specialist clinic data. This would provide greater clarity on the expediency of initial appointments and treatment and ongoing access to sight saving treatment.

To achieve this, fund ophthalmology staff specialist positions in the public system and develop new and innovative eye health workforce strategies that improve public access to cataract surgery and intravitreal injections in regional, rural and remote Australia.

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[1] Cataract causes bilateral vision impairment in 20% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 40 years and over and 14% of other Australians aged 50 years and older.
[2] The Fred Hollows Foundation by PricewaterhouseCoopers Australia, Investing in Vision: Comparing the costs and benefits of eliminating avoidable blindness and visual Impairment, February 2013
[3] In alignment with the Australia Governments National Strategic Action Plan for Macular Disease A better view - National Strategic Action Plan for Macular Disease (health.gov.au)

A National Framework for children's vision screening

Australian Government endorsement of a National Framework for children's vision screening to ensure all children have their eyes screened prior to starting school

Eye disorders are one of the most common long-term health problems experienced by Australian children[1]. If left untreated, they can lead to vision loss or blindness, having a lasting impact throughout childhood and adult life[2].

Eighty-percent of a child's learning occurs visually[3]. If an eye condition goes undetected, it can have significant long-term effects on a child's sensory, cognitive, social and language development[4].

Children with vision impairment have poorer educational outcomes, are less likely to attend school and more likely to face social exclusion and violence in the school environment[5].

Vision loss has life-long implications, in a study completed in 2016, Deloitte Access Economics found that a 17-year old living in Australia with a vision impairment received $53,916 less in earnings than a person with clear vision.

Good vision is therefore integral to childhood development, learning and success later in life. Making it essential that conditions compromising children's vision are identified and treated early to minimise long-term impacts.

Children's vision screening programs in Australia[6] have demonstrated great return on investment and have been highly successful in decreasing blindness in children[7], outweighing associated health care costs[8].

However, there is no consistent, evidence-based approach to screening children's vision, resulting in different approaches in each jurisdiction and variations in outcomes.

Vision 2020 Australia members recommend the development of a national evidence-based framework for the early identification and management of vision and eye health problems in 3.5 to 5 year-old children.

Adopting a National Framework will provide a cost-effective and robust approach to children's vision screening in Australia that will deliver benefits to future generations, helping detect vision disorders and prevent life-long vision loss in Australian children.

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[1] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2008), *Eye Health among Australian children*, accessed 16 August 2021.

[2] https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/98252212-cc46-477d-a0f3-adcefe01cd25/ehaac.pdf.aspx?inline=true

[3] MacCuspie, P. A. "Implications of visual impairment for social interaction." PA MacCuspie, Promoting acceptance of children with disabilities: From tolerance to inclusion. Halifax, Nova Scotia: APSEA (1996): 29-49.

[4] American Optometric Association, "Comprehensive pediatric eye and vision examination" (Accessed 3/10/10) http://aoa.uberflip.com/i/807465-cpg-pediatric-eye-and-vision-examination/9?m4=

[5] Burton, M J., et al. The Lancet Global Health Commission on Global Eye Health: vision beyond 2020, The Lancet, published online February 16, 2021.

[6] Integrated Care Strategy (2018), *Evaluation of the Statewide Eyesight Preschooler Program (StEPS) Final Report*, New South Wales Government, accessed 16 August 2021

[7] Incremental cost effectiveness ratio of $13,942 per QALY gained.

[8] Integrated Care Strategy (2018), *Evaluation of the Statewide Eyesight Preschooler Program (StEPS) Final Report*, New South Wales Government, accessed 16 August 2021

Education for Students who are Blind or have Low Vision

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.

Students with disability have a right to access and participate in education on the same basis as students without disability.

Children who are blind or have low vision can encounter barriers to learning and may require a set of disability-specific skills to be able to fully access and engage with the school curriculum.

Strengthening education systems to support students who are blind or have low vision to access and participate in education on the same basis as students without a vision impairment is essential for improving all students' educational outcomes, as identified in Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031.

To address barriers, the Expanded Core Curriculum has been developed which identifies key areas where students can benefit from additional, targeted education by qualified specialist teachers, including assistive technology, career education and independent living, among others.

The Expanded Core Curriculum is a methodical, proven approach used internationally, and in some parts of Australia. Research suggests that students who have been taught using its methodology enjoy better outcomes later in life.

Implementing The Expanded Core Curriculum nationally and ensuring national benchmarks are created to monitor delivery, will ensure children who are blind or have low vision receive an education equivalent to their peers and have equal access to opportunities in adulthood.

People who are blind or have low vision are also more likely to gain employment if they are equipped with a tertiary qualification. But universities don't always consider the access needs of people with vision disabilities when procuring information and communications technology.

As a result, students face barriers such as complicated web interfaces, inaccessible documents and unusable digital submission systems. This makes it difficult to access learning materials or complete assessments, forcing some students to discontinue their study.

Vision 2020 Australia calls on the Australian Government to set requirements for all publicly funded universities to comply with accessible information and communications technology procurement standards.

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Members

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