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.

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