

Attention: _____ (Name of MP)

Electorate: _____ (Name of Federal Electorate)

Where you live should not determine how well you can see!

I request your support for the establishment of an appropriate, accessible, and equitable national subsidy scheme for concession holders for low vision aids and technology and to include a means tested scheme for non-concession holders. The availability of a national low vision equipment scheme would make a real difference to quality of life and independence for a person with low vision.

Prior to the last election in 2007 the Macular Degeneration Foundation wrote to sitting Members of the Federal Parliament requesting support for subsidies for low vision aids and technology. This action resulted from a minimal response to ongoing efforts to address the matter, for many years, over successive Governments.

In August 2010, prior to the Federal election, the Macular Degeneration Foundation wrote to candidates with the same request as there was still no tangible outcome and **no action** after years of discussion, committees and frameworks. A copy of an analysis of low vision subsidies available via State is provided overleaf for your reference.

For a concession card holder needing a simple magnifier, every State has a different scheme, a different subsidy (if any), and a different delivery system. In contrast, if you need a hearing aid the Government provides a uniform, clear and simple system across the country. There is a real need to approach the provision of low vision aids and technology in the same way.

There is a need for strong representation at the Federal level to make real changes in this area for people with low vision. As my elected local Federal MP, could you please inform me of the action you will undertake to deliver an appropriate, accessible, and equitable subsidy scheme for low vision aids and technology across Australia. I look forward to receiving your response.

Insert Your Details

I, _____ (insert your full name)

Address: _____

Suburb: _____ **State:** _____ **Postcode:** _____

Telephone: (0 _) _____

Give permission for the Macular Degeneration Foundation to: (Please tick boxes)

1. Complete my Federal MP details and forward a copy of this letter to him/her
2. Keep a copy of this letter for the MD Foundation's records

Give permission for my local Federal Member of Parliament to: (Please tick box)

3. Forward a copy of their response letter to:
Macular Degeneration Foundation, Suite 302, 447 Kent Street, Sydney NSW 2000

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Subsidies for Low Vision Aids for Centrelink Concession Card holders via State and Territory:

The following table demonstrates the gross differences between the States and a lack of Government funded programs providing subsidies for specific low vision aids. Across Australia there is no consistent, equitable and appropriate Government subsidy scheme.

State	 Hand-held Magnifier (Approx. Average Cost \$150)	 Electronic Magnifier (Approx. Average Cost \$4,300)	Government Subsidy Available	Government Program, Criteria and Subsidy Notes	Low Vision Organisation Subsidy Available	Low Vision Organisation Program, Criteria and Subsidy Notes
ACT	Up to \$100 every 2 years	Up to \$100 every 2 years	Yes	Low Vision Aid Scheme (very few magnifiers listed, not practical)	No	n/a
NSW	Up to \$199 every 2 years	No	Yes	VisionCare NSW (Means tested - must have assets less than \$500)	No	n/a
NSW	Full cost reimbursed with a \$100 co-payment	Full cost reimbursed with a \$100 co-payment	Yes	Program of Appliances for Disable People (Added to new equipment list in 2004. Purchase must be pre-approved. Currently 12-18 month waiting list due to inadequate funding)	No	n/a
NT	No	No	No	n/a	No	n/a
QLD	No	No	No	n/a	Yes	QLD Blind Association (members who are legally blind can receive 20% discount up to \$1,000 every 3 years)
SA	No	No	No	n/a	Yes	Royal Society for the Blind (Equipment sold at cost price and clients are given a 50% discount up to a max. of \$2000)
TAS	70% or max. \$289.70 every 2 years	No	Yes	Spectacles and Intra-Ocular Assistance Scheme	No	n/a
VIC	No	No	No	n/a	No	n/a
WA	50% of the cost up to \$50 every 2 years	Yes	Yes	Spectacles Subsidy Scheme (Hand-held magnifier as prescribed by Low Vision Clinic)	Yes	Association for the Blind WA (10% discount for financial members. Funding for electronic magnifiers is available according to means test criteria)

Note: The Department of Veterans' Affairs pays the full cost of a magnifier or an electronic magnifier for Gold Card members.