

Thursday 29 January 2015

Mr Marcus Bleechmore  
Government Relations  
Vision Australia  
Email: [government.relations@visionaustralia.org](mailto:government.relations@visionaustralia.org)

Dear Mr Bleechmore

Thank you for your correspondence regarding matters of concern for Vision Australia in the context of the 2015 State Election

Queensland is a great place to live and work and does have a bright future, but with more uncertainty facing the rest of Australia and the world, we need to make sure Queensland stays on track to secure that bright future.

Through strong economic management, we are seeing real progress in health and education, more jobs in a stronger economy, better roads and less crime. And now that we've set the right financial foundations, we're able to truly afford the better schools and hospitals, improved roads and more police our growing state needs.

A re-elected Newman LNP Government will keep working hard to deliver our long term economic plan. We'll keep growing a four pillar economy focusing on agriculture, construction, resources and tourism to deliver more jobs and better services.

The LNP is committed to ensuring that Queensland is the safest place to live, work, visit and raise a family.

In response to your specific queries I'm pleased to provide the following response.

### **Funding**

As you would be aware, over the past three years the Newman LNP Government has provided \$3.285 million in funding directly to Vision Australia. In addition, the Newman LNP Government has also provided over \$2.2 million through the Department of Education, Training and Employment.

### **National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and Aged Care**

Please be assured that the Newman LNP Government is also committed to providing Queenslanders with a disability and their families with access to the support they need to enjoy a well-supported, dignified and fulfilling life.

On 12 December 2012, the Premier, the Hon. Campbell Newman announced the biggest disability funding increase in Queensland history. Starting with an extra \$25 million in 2013-14 and rising to an additional \$313 million by 2018-19, these extra funds will see the State's spending increase from a record \$959 million in 2012-13 to \$1.77 billion per year on disability related services by 2018-19.

The Newman LNP Government will also escalate disability funding at a rate of 4.5 per cent from 2015-16, in recognition of rising costs and demand for services. Despite this record allocation, there is still considerable unmet need for people with disability as a legacy of long-term neglect by the former Labor government. This is a legacy the Newman LNP Government is determined to overcome.

In May 2013, Premier Newman and the then Prime Minister signed a Heads of Agreement that together with the additional \$868 million of additional budgeted funds, would see the *National Disability Insurance Scheme* rolled out in Queensland from July 2016. Since that time, the Newman LNP Government has done much to prepare our state for the scheme.

This has included delivering record budgets for disability services and reducing the waiting lists for disability aids and equipment by 4,000 people. In July 2014, the Minister for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, the Hon. Tracy Davis, announced *National Disability Insurance Agency* (NDIA) would be coming to Queensland early. The NDIA have staff on the ground in Townsville and in Brisbane and are starting to prepare our state ahead of the July 2016 transition start date.

If re-elected the Newman LNP Government will continue to work to deliver on these initiatives so that our state is best placed for the NDIS. This preparation is crucial for people with a disability, their families and their carers, as the NDIS will truly be a quantum shift in the way they receive their support and services. Beyond choice and control, participants in the scheme will have their packages tailored by the NDIA to be based on each individual's goals and aspirations.

Last year, the Newman LNP Government released the *Queensland Disability Plan 2014-2019*, which sets the path to the NDIS. As you know the NDIS will fundamentally transform the way disability supports are accessed and delivered. It will empower people with a disability to exercise choice and control over their supports, as well as enable greater social and economic participation.

There is significant work already underway to prepare for our transition to the scheme, and Queensland is well placed with the rollout. Our trail of self-directed funding, *Your Life Your Choice*, already has over 1,300 participants – more than double the forecast uptake of this program. Furthermore, we are closely monitoring NDIS trial sites in other jurisdictions. The Newman LNP Government is implementing learnings from these trials to inform the transition to the NDIS.

As part of planning for the transition to the NDIS, the Newman LNP Government is working hard to get Queenslanders ready to take advantage of the benefits the NDIS presents. The *Queensland Disability Advisory Councils* and *Queensland Planning and Implementation Group* provide important advice to the Minister for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services about issues NDIA are represented on these advisory bodies.

A re-elected Newman LNP Government will continue the revitalisation of existing front-line services to give Queenslanders with a disability and their families, greater choice and control over the services they receive. These changes will deliver real improvements and prepare Queensland for the NDIS.

The age-based division of responsibility for disability services and aged care services is based on long-standing arrangements between the Australian and State and Territory Governments, and is reflected in the *National Disability Agreements* and in the July 2012 *National Health Reform Agreement*. Responsibility for funding services to people with disability aged 65 years and over (50 years and over for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders), rests fully with the Australian Government.

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A person over the age of 65 may seek assistance from the Australian Government through the *My Aged Care* website, which has been established to help people navigate the aged care system and includes information on support available at home. This website is accessed at [www.myagedcare.gov.au/help-home](http://www.myagedcare.gov.au/help-home) and includes information in relation to goods and equipment. The Australian Government's *Home and Community Care* (HACC) program is specifically designed to support people to stay living at home and to continue being independent in the community.

### **Getting around – Trains, buses and taxis**

The Newman LNP Government is prepared to commit to the implementation of the vision impairment travel pass in the next term subject to any technical issues from the current trial being completely resolved. The Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme (TTSS) is very well used and research has shown that a small proportion of users have a higher proportion of TTSS use. Given that the scheme broadly accommodates most user requirements, there are no plans to increase this subsidy in the near future.

If re-elected the Newman LNP Government will commit to working towards the implementation of comprehensive tracking system in the next term of Government.

Audible announcements are already in place on rail and tram services, but this is more difficult to implement on all bus services. However the Newman LNP Government will commit to working towards full implementation on bus services in the next term of Government should it be re-elected.

### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders**

The Newman LNP Government is committed to bringing about real and enduring change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders and their communities. An important part of the process of change is ensuring the coordination of Government policy, programs and services across Departments. To this end, the Newman LNP Government established the *Cabinet Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs* (CCATSIA) in early 2013.

The Newman LNP Government agrees that meeting the health needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders is vitally important, particularly for those who are blind or have low vision. In November 2014 the Newman LNP Government signed the *National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes 2013-2016* that commits the state to \$54.3 million per annum, or \$162.9 million over the life of the agreement.

In terms of vision-related services for Indigenous people, \$5 million was allocated to the Diamond Jubilee Trust to deliver an *Indigenous Eye Van* which saw its first patients in March 2014. Additionally, a re-elected Newman LNP Government has committed to funding 9 additional doctors; 31 additional nurses; and 8 additional health practitioners across the Cape and Torres Strait over the next three years.

There is already a wide range of organisations and government agencies that engage directly with Indigenous people. It is appropriate to utilise as many of them as possible to contribute to informing Indigenous people about available services and assisting them to access those services.

A further reason for using these organisations and agencies for this role is that frequently Indigenous people have more than one particular health and/or human services need and taking a holistic approach provides for assisting the whole person rather than just dealing with a particular aspect.

## Employment and support for school leavers

The Newman LNP Government is committed to ensuring that all Queenslanders can access the benefits that come with getting a quality education and a job. That's why we have revitalised the vocational education and training system in Queensland to ensure that people are not training for training's sake – but training for quality jobs.

The Newman LNP Government is strongly supporting pathways for people with a disability. We are continuing with our support for those most in need by providing disadvantaged Queenslanders with training under our *Community Learning Program*.

The *Community Learning Program* is an essential part of our strong plan for a brighter future in Queensland. The program delivers \$47 million over 5 years for disadvantaged learners, including people with disabilities, with grants provided to community and training organisations that deliver community based training and help learners gain nationally accredited qualifications.

These projects help individuals fulfil their potential, while reducing unemployment, boosting productivity and supercharging our economy. The *Community Learning Program* has delivered 9,000 training places to disadvantaged learners across Queensland. Almost 70 per cent of them are now in employment or further training.

As part of our *Jobs of Tomorrow* election commitment, we're extending the community program through our *Pathway to a Quality Job* initiative, specifically aimed at providing additional support for disadvantaged young people to gain nationally accredited qualifications.

The *Certificate III Guarantee* also entitles all eligible Queenslanders to their first post-school Certificate III level qualification in a priority area. Under our *Jobs of Tomorrow* election commitment, our \$30 million *Skilling Up* initiative will now allow 15 to 24 year olds to gain up to two Certificate III qualifications in a priority area at no cost.

Queenslanders studying through the *Certificate III Guarantee* can also access our *Skills Disability Support* program, which provides additional facilities and support to enable people with disabilities to complete nationally recognised training qualifications.

## Accessible Voting:

As you may be aware the Parliament approved amendments to the *Electoral Act 1992* last year which authorised the Electoral Commission Queensland (ECQ) to implement processes to allow electronically assisted voting. For the present election the ECQ has indicated such measures will apply in relation to Blind and Low Vision voting. Procedures are set out on the ECQ's website at <http://www.ecq.qld.gov.au/2015QLD.aspx?id=11886>.

While the provision exists to extend electronic voting, this will only be done when suitable safeguards are in place to ensure there is no threat to the integrity of the voting process. It is interesting to note that the Federal Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters examined the issue of electronic voting in its *Second interim report on the inquiry into the conduct of the 2013 federal election: An assessment of electronic voting options*.

The Committee raised issues which would have to be resolved before the more widespread introduction of electronic voting could occur. The Committee's report is available at [http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Joint/Electoral\\_Matters/2013\\_General\\_Election](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Electoral_Matters/2013_General_Election).

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You can be assured that the Newman LNP Government will be working with the ECQ to attempt to resolve these matters to ensure that the widest possible array of voting opportunities are available to Queensland voters.

While a lot has been achieved, the job is not yet done.

We will be making new policy announcements to enhance the LNP's strong plan for Queensland over the remaining days of the election campaign, and I encourage you to continue to monitor the work that we are doing to deliver dividends for Queenslanders that can only come from better economic management and responsible government.

If Queensland goes off track now, the real progress we are starting to see will be at risk.

We cannot afford the political chaos that would occur if Labor flopped over the line with the help of wasted votes on minor parties and independents. That will only make Queensland weaker.

Vote LNP to keep on course for a brighter future and a stronger Queensland.

Thank you for taking the time to write and I hope this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,



Brad Henderson  
State Director