

**Senate Community Affairs Committee**  
**ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**  
**FAMILIES, HOUSING, COMMUNITY SERVICES AND**  
**INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO**  
**2011-12 Additional Estimates Hearings**

**Outcome Number:** 5

**Question No:** 176

**Topic:** National Disability Insurance Scheme

**Hansard Page:** Written

**Senator Fifield** asked:

What programs are currently in place to ensure that the needs of people with low vision and blindness over pension age are met?

**Answer:**

The Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) administers a range of programs to improve community accessibility for people who are blind or with low vision in addition to income support payments it provides to eligible people with disability.

- The Print Disability Services Program provides funding to five organisations to produce digital masters of print material which can be converted into alternative formats for people with print disability.
- The Postal Concessions for the Blind program enables blind people, and eligible organisations that service the needs of blind people, to send Braille, Moon, audio recording and other eligible material through Australia Post. The Department reimburses Australia Post for the postage costs of material eligible under the program.
- As part of the accessible communities package to support the National Disability Strategy, the Australian Government provided \$1 million (2010-11 Federal Budget) for the provision of playback devices to improve access to print material in a digital format for people with print disability from selected public libraries across the country. The playback devices enable people with print disability to benefit from recent improvements in digital technology and increase access to the vast range of material available through public libraries.
- FaHCSIA administers the Cinema Access Implementation Plan which will provide improved access to cinemas for deaf or hearing impaired, blind or vision impaired people by ensuring 242 screens will be accessible by the end of 2014. The disability sector and the Australian Government agreed to the proposal from the four main cinema chains (Hoyts, Village Cinemas, Event Cinemas and Reading Cinemas) to fast track implementation of new audio description and captioning technology in their cinema chain complexes.

Further assistance is available through the Department of Health and Ageing and the Department of Veterans Affairs.