

# Blind Citizens Australia

Friday, 10 March 2006

Committee Secretary  
Community Affairs Committee  
Department of the Senate  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Australia

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Dear Secretary,

***RE: Inquiry into Family Assistance, Social Security and Veterans' Affairs Legislation (2005 Budget and Other Measures) Bill 2006***

Blind Citizens Australia (BCA) is the National peak advocacy organisation of people who are blind or vision impaired for people who are blind or vision impaired. Our mission is to achieve equity and equality by our empowerment, by promoting positive community attitudes and by striving for high quality and accessible services which meet our needs. We have in excess of 3,000 individual members, branches nationwide and around 15 affiliate organisations.

With regards to the Family Assistance, Social Security and Veterans' Affairs Legislation (2005 Budget and Other Measures) Bill 2006, Blind Citizens Australia is concerned that the changes to the Carers Allowance under 'Schedule 6—Carer allowance backdating provisions' of the proposed Bill are unjustifiably harsh to parents/carers looking after children who are blind or vision impaired. Parents whose

children have been newly diagnosed with a severe vision impairment are left dealing with difficult emotions and complex challenges to their family life where financial entitlements simply do not become a priority until a later time. BCA thereby asserts that to financially punish parents/carers for this natural process of grief by shortening the backdating period available to 12 weeks is unjustified.

For these reasons, Blind Citizens Australia recommend to the Community Affairs Committee that 'Schedule 6—Carer allowance backdating provisions' be removed from the Family Assistance, Social Security and Veterans' Affairs Legislation (2005 Budget and Other Measures) Bill 2006.

If the Committee has any questions relating to our submission, please contact me at head office on 03 9372 6400.

Yours Sincerely,

**Nadia Mattiazzo**  
Executive Officer  
Blind Citizens Australia