



The Royal
Society for
the Blind

Committee Secretary
Senate Community Affairs References Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

RE: Inquiry into Planning Options and Services for People Ageing with a Disability

The Royal Society for the Blind (RSB) is the primary provider of services to people who are blind or vision impaired in South Australia, currently providing the full range of rehabilitation services to over 11,000 South Australians.

Planning options for people who are blind or vision impaired within Australia can be separated into two categories:

- Having a vision loss prior to the age of 65
- Acquiring a vision loss after the age of 65

Both groups suffer the same impact from vision loss on their quality of life. Both require specialist rehabilitation services. Depending on which category they are in are treated by the Government funded programs in different ways and through different Government jurisdictions and Departments.

For instance State Government Disability Services are restricted to those under the age of 65. The ACAP Assessment does not take into account the impact of vision loss or provide equipment to allow continued independence for those suffering chronic eye disease.

The impact of vision loss once rehabilitation programs have been completed in areas such as:

- Orientation and Mobility
- Independent Living
- Information Access

by the RSB is significantly reduced if supported by the provision of adaptive equipment and training.

Our Services

Adaptive Technology
Community Education
Counselling
Employment Services
Guide Dog Service
Industrial Services
Low Vision Centre
Mobility Services
Outreach Services
Peer Support
Print Alternatives
Recreation & Leisure
Systemic Advocacy

Adelaide

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GPO Box 1855
Adelaide SA 5001
Office 8232 4777
Donate 1800 644 577
Email mail@rsb.org.au

Corporate Office

254 Angas Street
Adelaide SA 5000
8223 6222

Industrial & RSB Guide Dog Services

11 Blacks Road
Gilles Plains SA 5086
8261 4121

Regional Offices

Mount Gambier
Noarlunga
Port Augusta
Smithfield
Victor Harbor

www.rsb.org.au



The provision of Adaptive Equipment such as:

- Electronic Magnifiers
- Screen Reading Software
- Magnification software
- White canes
- Guide Dogs

are just a few of the items required for an independent life for a person who is blind or vision impaired. This equipment is currently excluded from the Independent Equipment Programs provided around Australia. It is important that the above mentioned equipment is made available to both pre 65 years and over 65 years and is transferable between funded programs for maintenance and enhancement.

It is estimated that the RSB client number over the age of 65 will increase by 40 percent during the next decade. By not having a proactive Government policy and funded support program this group of people who are blind or vision impaired will be unable to continue to part of the community and may suffer early institutionalisation rather than being able to remain independent.

Recommendations

Under current Government policy and programs the following changes or additions are required:

- A National Vision Loss Rehabilitation Framework to compliment the National Eye Health Framework is required to support the population who are ageing.
- Do not exclude specialist Rehabilitation Services from people who are blind or vision impaired from age funded programs and HACC programs for single disability service providers.

For future policy the Government needs to acknowledge that vision loss is not restricted to a particular age group and that generic services are not able to provide rehabilitation programs currently provided by the RSB and other organisations who rely primarily on the charity dollar.

If the committee requires any further information or explanation of the above comments, please do not hesitate to contact me on 8223 6222.

Tony Starkey
Future Solutions Officer