THE TURNBULL COALITION TEAM

CCHQ 2016

Logos above read - The Turnbull Coalition team CCHQ 2016. The Turnbull Coalition Team – The Plan for a Strong New Economy.

29 June 2016

Ms Julie McKay

Government Relations and Policy

Vision Australia

454 Glenferrie Road

KOOYONG VIC 3144

Dear Ms McKay

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the views of the Coalition on important issues facing your members. On behalf of the Coalition Members of Parliament and candidates I am pleased to respond to your survey.

Australia's future depends on how well we can continue to grow and shape our economy.

Only the Liberal and National Parties have an economic plan to do that and ensure Australia's future.

We have a clear plan to transition the economy from the mining and investment boom to a stronger and more diverse economy.

The key elements of our national economic plan for jobs and growth are:

* An Innovation and Science programme bringing Australian ideas to market. This means greater investment and more jobs and opportunities for our young people;
* A New Defence Industry plan that will secure an advanced defence manufacturing industry in Australia. This will create thousands of new hi-tech, higher paying jobs;
* Export Trade Deals that will generate more than 19,000 new export opportunities. These will create many more jobs for our urban and regional families;
* New Tax Incentives, which will include tax cuts for more small businesses. More than two million businesses can benefit, to deliver more growth and jobs; and
* A Strong New Economy with more than 200,000 jobs expected to be created.

Our national economic plan and management is already paying dividends. Last year our economy continued to grow creating almost 300,000 new jobs, many of them in small business.

We cannot put economic growth and the jobs that come with it at risk with a return to Labor and their debt and deficits, high taxing, big spending ideas.

Only a Liberal and National Party Government can protect Australia's future.

Once announced, our policies will be available at [www.liberal.org.au](http://www.liberal.org.au) and [www.nationals.org.au](http://www.nationals.org.au).

Thank you for communicating the Coalition's commitments to your members.



Yours sincerely

Tony Nutt

National Campaign Director

COALITION RESPONSE TO VISION AUSTRALIA

The Turnbull Coalition team appreciates the significance of eye disease in Australia and supports appropriate preventative health measures to decrease the rate of avoidable vision impairment and blindness.

The 2016 Budget provided $33.8 million for new Medicare item numbers for non-mydriatic retinal photography to help prevent blindness due to diabetes. This will deliver testing for about 370,000 people, with a strong emphasis on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are disproportionately affected by diabetes.

Diabetic retinopathy is currently the leading cause of vision loss and blindness in working age Australians and a major cause of vision loss amongst older Australians. Retinal photography is an important part of a National Diabetes Blindness Prevention proposal developed jointly by Diabetes Australia and Vision 2020.

The Coalition is dedicated to Closing the Gap in Indigenous eye health and is investing around $44 million over the period 2013-14 to 2018-19 to improve eye health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This includes:

* $6.6 million for trachoma health promotion, improved coordination of eye care services to ensure that patients are getting the right service at the right time and data analysis to provide information for ongoing needs.
* $11.3 million for the Visiting Optometrist Scheme. Ophthalmology services are supported through the Rural Health Outreach Fund which includes eye health as a priority.
* $16 million for trachoma control activities.

Trachoma prevalence has been reduced from 14 per cent in 2009 to 4.7 per cent in 2014 and Australia is now on track to eliminate trachoma by 2020. Funding is available in the Indigenous Australians' Health Programme for the continuation of eye health activities, including trachoma control.

The Coalition Government recognises that vision loss has a powerful impact on independence, employment and quality of life. We are delivering on the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) that will significantly improve the lives of people with vision loss and their families. The Coalition will continue to work with States and Territories to finalise agreements and to ensure that services are ready. At the end of 2015, nearly 28,000 people were being assisted through NDIS trial and early transition sites. When fully implemented, this number is expected to rise to 460,000.

The Coalition has successfully managed the roll out of the NDIS, to ensure that it is being delivered on time and on budget.

The Coalition Government has now reached agreement for the full roll out of the NDIS with seven States and Territories - NSW, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, the Northern Territory and the ACT.

Together, these agreements provide certainty for around 90 per cent of the 460,000 Australians expected to be eligible for the NDIS.

In Western Australia, we have agreed to extend the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) and NDIS trials for an additional year and expand them into new locations. This will give certainty to nearly 11,000 current and future participants of the Western Australian trials that they can expect ongoing support. The Commonwealth and Western Australian Governments have agreed to finalise arrangements for the full rollout of the NDIS in Western Australia by the end of 2016 for commencement of full transition from 1 July 2017.

The Coalition Government has announced the establishment of the NDIS Savings Fund Special Account to ensure the ongoing funding of the NDIS. Savings from across Government will be credited to the fund to meet the $4.4 billion annual NDIS funding gap from 2019-20 that the former Labor Government left behind. This funding gap is expected to exceed $6 billion over the next decade. The Coalition has already committed more than $2 billion in savings to the fund in the 2016- 17 Budget.

Employment

The Turnbull Coalition Government funds both supported and open employment opportunities for people with disability, including the visually impaired and blind, to ensure there are opportunities for as many people as possible to participate in work, as well as a range of services targeted to support their employers.

Over the next four years, a Coalition Government will invest over $3 billion in Disability Employment Services and associated services to provide open employment opportunities for people with disability, including the visually impaired and blind.

The Coalition will also provide more than $650 million towards supported employment through Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs) over the next three years to ensure their viability and importance in providing employment for people with severe disability such as blindness.

In 2014-15, the Coalition provided 186 ADEs with $219.3 million to deliver supported employment to nearly 21,000 people with disability in 295 outlets across Australia. This important assistance funds the type of support that individuals may require in the workplace including occupational health and safety assistance and ongoing close supervision to undertake their work tasks.

In addition to this assistance, the Coalition has provided ADEs with a $189 million support package comprising:

* $141 million to help ADEs transition employees from the Business Services Wage Assessment Tool (BSWAT) to new wage tools;
* $32 million to develop and pilot a new wage assessment tool for ADEs based on productivity alone, in consultation with the sector and the Fair Work Commission; and
* $25 million to better support job seekers with disability and employers in the open labour market and begin shaping disability employment toward a new model in 2018.

Following the Federal Court's decision in relation to the discriminatory nature of BSWAT, the Coalition set up the BSWAT Payment Scheme to provide a one-off payment to eligible intellectually impaired persons who have had their wages assess under the BSWAT. Earlier this year, the Coalition passed legislation to increase these payments for affected employees. The Payment Scheme calculates payments at 70 per cent of alleged lost wages.

Before the Coalition's recent amendments, payments were calculated at 50 per cent. The Business Services Wage Assessment Tool Amendment Act 2016 also extends all current BSWAT Payment Scheme deadlines by 12 months, to allow further time for people with disability to register and apply for a payment. The BSWAT Payment Scheme has received more than 2,100 registrations and 700 applications since it opened in July 2015. Payments are exempt from 'income' for social security purposes to preserve eligibility for the Disability Support Pension and to prevent debts being raised against participants in the BSWAT Payment Scheme.

The Coalition firmly believes that ADEs have a critical and ongoing role in providing employment opportunities for people with disability and will continue to work with the sector to improve wage outcomes for supported employees, alongside ensuring the sustainability of Australian Disability Enterprises.

Education

The Turnbull Government is committed to supporting students with disabilities, including the visually impaired and blind, is an important goal.

The Coalition Government is providing $5.3 billion is being provided for students with disability over the period 2014 to 2017. This is more funding for students with disability than ever before and includes almost $1.4 billion in 2016 and over $1.5 billion in 2017.

It also includes an extra $118.2 million for schools to support students with disability for the 2016 and 2017 calendar years and is informed for the first time by Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students (NCDD). This funding is directed to the schools most in need, hence nearly 80 per cent of the extra funding goes to Government schools.

The NCCD process is one that has been ongoing since 2008 and involves all Ministers of Education through the Education Council.

The Coalition Government did not cut the More Support for Students with Disability (MSSD) programme. This programme was a temporary measure introduced by the previous Government in 2013 for one year to provide a short term funding boost to build capacity of schools to improve the quality of education for students with disability. This includes the improvement of teacher skills and increasing the inclusiveness of schools.

The Coalition Government extended MSSD for one year in 2014 at a cost of $100 million to ensure all schools had adequate preparation.

Future Commonwealth school funding will have a loading for students with disability. The Coalition Government will continue to work with States and Territories and the non-Government sector to ensure that the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability becomes more robust to inform decision makers on how best to target funding to those most in need.

The Coalition Government has also committed $534.9 million from 1 July 2016 for the Inclusion Support Programme (ISP) and specialist support to remove barriers so early childhood and child care services can include children with additional needs.

The Coalition wants to ensure all children with disability, including the visually impaired and blind, can access a high-quality learning experience from a young age and we want to help parents balance work and family responsibilities. That's why our commitment to the ISP represents a 25 per cent increase in funds compared with the current programme. We're also increasing the subsidy rate from $17 to $23 for child care services to engage additional qualified educator to assist with the inclusion of a child with disability with high support needs.

Seniors

Supporting seniors access to blindness and low vision services is already supported through a range of Government programmes including the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) and Home Care packages.

CHSP can include the purchase of low vision aids such as electronic magnifiers and magnifying/reading software. Their services help older Australians, their carer's and families to manage these conditions and maximise client independence so they can remain living in their own homes.

In addition vision support services can also be provided through home care packages. The amount and type of aids, equipment and other services that may be included in a package of care will depend on the consumers other care needs, and what is agreed between the consumer and the provider, within the limit of the package's funding.

Free to air television

Audio description technology allows people with visual impairments to access and enjoy audio-visual content.

If re-elected, the Coalition Government will consider how access to these technologies can be improved, including through the impending results of the trial of audio-description on ABC's iView.

iVote

The Coalition strongly supports moves to help electors with visual impairment cast their vote independently at the upcoming Federal Election. On 2 July 2016, blind and low vision voters will have the option of voting with assistance at any polling booth, by post or by using the assisted telephone voting system from the voters' own telephone.

The assisted telephone voting system was first used at the 2013 Federal Election, with bipartisan support, and was developed in consultation with key organisations including Vision Australia, Blind Citizens Australia, the Royal Society for the Blind South Australia, as well as the Australian Disability Discrimination Commissioner and representatives of the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) including the Electoral Commissioner.

Using the assisted telephone voting system, a call centre voting assistant will record the voter's preferences on the ballot papers. The vote will be secret and a second voting assistant will ensure the vote is recorded according to the voter's intention. The vote remains secret because the call centre voting assistants will not know the voter's name and address. Once the vote is complete, the voting assistant will place the ballot papers in secure ballot boxes.

The AEC reported positive feedback from both stakeholders and from voters using the assisted telephone service, with users commenting that the service allowed them to vote independently for the first time.

The Joint Standing Committee Electoral Matters (JSCEM) reviewed the potential use of iVote in its report into the 2013 Federal Election but concluded that, "there are questions about the security of the NSW iVote system and the capacity for its use in federal elections ..." and did not recommend its adoption at Federal elections.

Private Health Insurance

A re-elected Coalition Government will improve the value for money Australians receive from their private health insurance and ensure they can easily shop around for a more-affordable deal. We will do this by ensuring Australians can access standard levels of cover that is explained in plain English and protects patients against junk policies and fine print.

Our private health reforms will include:

• developing easily understood categories of private health insurance policies (eg. labelled gold, silver, bronze);

weeding out junk policies (policies that only cover patients in a public hospital) by ensuring consumers have access to a product with a mandated minimum level of cover;

* developing standard definitions for medical procedures across all insurers so consumers can compare policies more easily;
* simplifying billing so that consumers can receive a single bill covering all costs of a medical procedure - such as the surgeon and anaesthetist - to avoid unplanned bill shock;
* ensuring that insurers use plain English and disclose policy information in a consumer-friendly way;
* making fine print and commissions more transparent;
* ensuring the current gateway [www.privatehealth.gov.au](http://www.privatehealth.gov.au) reflects these improvements and allows consumers to more easily compare policies and access information; and
* developing products to meet the specific needs of Australians living in rural and remote Australia.

Community rating will be maintained. This means that consumers will not pay different premiums based on their age, health or lifestyle factors (eg. smoking).

The Coalition will also ensure that private health insurance is affordable and gives people value for money, by allowing them to shop around for a better deal and addressing the regulatory issues that are adding to the cost of premiums and discouraging innovation.

There are currently over 40,000 private health insurance products on the market and consumers are rightly frustrated. Making it easier for consumers to shop around will increase competition in the private health sector and, in turn, improve value for money and affordability for consumers.

Around 12 million Australians have private health insurance - that's half the population.

Unlike Labor and the Greens, the Coalition understands that hard-working Australians want value for money from their policies, not further cuts to their rebate as we have seen from Bill Shorten. Labor's cut to the private health insurance rebate now total $7 billion without any reform to match. This includes cutting support for families on incomes under $100,000 - the very people Bill Shorten claims need to be protected.

Labor's proposed cuts to the rebate for junk policies will not give consumers enough time to switch to compliant policies and maintain their private health cover. The Coalition is working with the sector to ensure that reforms are implemented in a timely way and that consumers have advance notice of changes that will affect them.

A strong private health insurance system is a fundamental element of our health system. It offers consumers greater choice over their care, whilst taking pressure off Medicare and public hospitals so that their universality remains sustainable.

Private health rebates should not be treated like a golden goose for Labor Governments desperate for cash. The Coalition was the party who introduced the private health insurance rebate and only the Coalition can be trusted to protect it.