**media release**

Tuesday, 6 May 2014

**Two Australian leaders who are blind recognised with international Award**

Today, Vision Australia congratulates, Deputy Chair Emeritus Professor Ron McCallum and General Manager Advocacy and Engagement, Maryanne Diamond on being announced as recipients of the international2014 Henry Viscardi Achievement Awards.

The Awards pay tribute to exemplary leaders in the disability community who have had a profound impact on shaping attitudes, raising awareness and improving the quality of life of people with disabilities.

With nominations received from 11 countries, this year’s 12 recipients come from the United States, Australia and Kazakhstan and include:

* Jim Abbott – Former MLB Pitcher & Gold Medal Olympian
* Marca Bristo – President & CEO of Access Living of Metropolitan Chicago
* Rory Cooper, Ph.D. – Distinguished Professor at the University of Pittsburgh
* Maryanne Diamond – General Manager Advocacy and Engagement at Vision Australia
* Neil Jacobson – Founder & CEO of Abilicorp
* Arlene Mayerson – Attorney at the Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund (DREDF)
* Marlee Matlin – Academy Award & Golden Globe Award-winning Actress
* Ron McCallum – Emeritus Professor at the University of Sydney
* Thomas Porter – Volunteer at Walter Reed Army Medical Center
* Susan Sygall - Co-founder & CEO of Mobility International USA (MIUSA)
* Yevgeniy Tetyukhin – Professor at the Petropavlovsk North Kazakhstan State University
* Mary Verdi-Fletcher – President & Founding Artistic Director of Dancing Wheels

“We’re truly honoured to bestow upon such a dedicated, diverse and trend-setting group of leaders this year’s Award,” said **John D. Kemp**, President and CEO of The Viscardi Center. “Every day people with disabilities are leaving their footprint in communities all over the world, and their work often transcends the geographical boundaries where they live. The Award recipients challenge us, reminding us all that our work does make a meaningful difference.”

The Henry Viscardi Achievement Awards were developed to honour the extraordinary societal contributions of the Awardees in the spirit of the legacy and vision of the Center’s founder, Dr. Henry Viscardi, Jr., who himself wore prosthetic legs. As one of the world’s leading advocates for people with disabilities, he served as a disability advisor to eight presidents, from Franklin D. Roosevelt to Jimmy Carter.

Individuals of any age, with any type of disability, are eligible. The Awards recognise individual, academia, athletic, community, government, nonprofit, military, corporate, and business leaders who are working to improve the lives of people with disabilities.

“It is often said that we, as a society, are at our best when ordinary people do extraordinary things — especially when it comes to making an impact on the world around us,” said **former U.S. Senator Robert Dole**, who co-chaired the Award Selection Committee. “These twelve individuals have demonstrated creativity, determination, ingenuity, leadership, success and tenacity. They embody what people with disabilities can accomplish