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Dear Mr Bleechmore

Thank you for your correspondence seeking the views of the Queensland Greens party and our candidates on a range of matters of interest to your organisation. Following are our responses to a number of specific questions you have raised, along with our policy position on more general matters relating to people with vision impairment or related disabilities. This response is on behalf of the Queensland Greens and our candidates across all 89 electorates.

This document outlines key priorities for the 2015 state election. Vision Australia seeks a commitment on these priorities from you and your party to keep improving this State for Queenslanders who are blind or have low vision.

As a general principle, the Queensland Greens believe all people have a right to independence, self-determination and choice in their lives. People who experience physical, intellectual, cognitive and/or psychiatric disability, and their families and carers, have the right to actively participate in all levels of policy, service planning and delivery and evaluation, including their own.

We believe society has a responsibility to accommodate diversity and remove barriers to equitable access for all, and it is a responsibility of governments to ensure substantive equality and equal opportunity, and to provide funding to ensure this in all areas.

Society should be free of harassment, abuse, vilification, stigmatisation, discrimination, disadvantage or exploitation on the basis of disability.

Without ongoing contracted funding from the Queensland Government, Vision Australia will be unable to provide our current level of services and support to Queenslanders who are blind or have low vision. We are particularly concerned about how services for people living in country Queensland and people over the age of 65 will be funded.

The Greens believe Queensland government and community agencies and businesses should develop and maintain a culture of support for, understanding of, and respect for people with disabilities. As part of this, there must be adequate, ongoing, fully indexed funding for high quality, lifetime care and support for people with a disability, which is sufficient to meet their needs, regardless of how or where the person acquired a disability or where they live.

In addition, governments should value the role of advocacy and services provided by community organisations. Appropriately targeted financial support provided to these groups assists governments to better refine their policies and the delivery of services and other funding.

Vision Australia calls on the next Queensland Government to sign a Heads of Agreement for the implementation of the NDIS in Queensland. This will provide certainty to Queenslanders with disability, and will enable service providers, like Vision Australia, to plan better services for the future.

The Queensland Greens support the establishment of a Heads of Agreement for the implementation of the NDIS in Queensland. It is absolutely vital that the NDIS be implemented effectively and with adequate resourcing from both state and federal level.

Vision Australia calls on you and your party to fight for a better deal for Queensland seniors living with disability, and show leadership on behalf of the tens of thousands of constituents aged over 65 years of age who are living with deteriorating sight and blindness.

Whilst the NDIS is crucial social policy, it will not cover every person with every disability. Other government expenditure which assists people to remain independent will enable reduced expenditure in other areas. The Queensland Greens support working with Vision Australia to identify the more effective ways to commit resources to assist older people who are living with poor sight and blindness.

Vision Australia seeks a commitment from you and your party to fully implement the Vision Impairment Travel Pass in the next term of the Queensland Parliament.

The Queensland Greens support the implantation of a Vision Impairment Travel Pass.

Vision Australia calls on you and your party to commit to increasing the TTSS to help Queenslanders who are blind or have low vision overcome gross financial inequity compared with their interstate counterparts.

The Queensland Greens support extra resources being provided to the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme to assist Queensland who are blind or how poor vision. Expenditure in this areas assists in enabling or maintaining greater social and economic participation and independence for individuals, which can often mean greater revenue for government from income tax from employed individuals, and/or reduced need, and this expenditure, in other services and supports.

Vision Australia calls on you and your party to implement a comprehensive tracking system with audio announcements for bus transport, including at interchanges in Queensland. For the benefit of all travellers, Vision Australia calls on you and your party to commit to mandate that clear, audible announcements be made on all public transport journeys in this state.

The Queensland Greens support the development of a world class public transport system. This would include a comprehensive tracking system of the type described with intelligible announcements of locations and destinations.

Vision Australia calls on you and your party to fund additional ATSI community engagement workers.

The Queensland Greens recognise the necessity to provide support and workers specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and people, and support adequate funding being provided for this purpose. These communities need to have meaningful input into the nature and delivery of those services.

Employment

Vision Australia calls on you and your party to double the workforce participation rate of people with disability within the next term of parliament with targeted plans that lift public sector participation, and deliver private sector job opportunities in partnership with employers.

The Queensland Greens support:

- *Strengthening funding for disability advocacy services, community education programs, and the removal of structural barriers to equality of access to education, training and employment;*
- *The provision of meaningful employment and training opportunities which take into account the specific needs of people with disability.*
- *Access to specialised employment support services for people with disability, including vision impairment, who choose to enter the workforce.*

Vision Australia calls on you and your party to ensure the 'Support for school leavers' program is enhanced to better provide for the needs of people with disability just out of school and trying to find their way in the world.

The Queensland Greens support adequately resourcing pathways that support school leavers with disability to make the transition from school into meaningful employment, educational and vocational programs or other community-based activities.

The Greens also support all efforts to ensure the 'Support for School Leavers' program better meets the needs of young people who are blind or have low vision.

Accessible voting

The Queensland Greens support all efforts to ensure accessible voting is available to all voters at any location, using the telephone or internet. This should apply for state, federal and local government elections.

Thank you for giving the Queensland Greens the opportunity to provide our views in this important policy area. Please get in touch if you would like further information or clarification.

Yours sincerely



Penny Allman-Payne
Convenor, Queensland Greens