

## GLASSES & OPTICAL SERVICES

[http://www.maca.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/141567/Vision\\_and\\_older\\_people\\_seminar.pdf](http://www.maca.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/141567/Vision_and_older_people_seminar.pdf)

At a seminar for the NSW Committee on Ageing on 'Vision and Older People' – March 2002, Dr Rebecca Ivers from the Institute for International Health outlined:

### Five major diseases of the eyes which affect older people:

- **cataract** - treated easily by surgery with good results if no other eye disease is present;
- **glaucoma** - good results are possible if treated early (usually by drops and perhaps laser);
- **macular degeneration** - the commonest cause of blindness in those over 50 years old in the developed world and affecting 18% of people over 85; it is associated with smoking, high blood pressure and perhaps diet; early laser treatment may help some people;
- **diabetic retinopathy** - is increasing in prevalence as diabetes is increasing; it can be treated by treating the diabetes and such means as laser surgery; it affects 70% of people who have had diabetes for 15 years or more;
- **refractive error** - around 50% of older people in a large study of those living in the Blue Mountains had significant improvement in their vision (between one and three lines on a vision chart) by simply obtaining new glasses.

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All persons over 40 years should have regular eye tests, whether or not they think they have eyesight problems – a minimum of every two years is recommended. The importance of regular eye examinations cannot be overstated. Failure to detect and diagnose any eye health disorders/conditions (including uncorrected refractive error), at an early time, will have significant consequences on individuals' health, personal safety/security and quality of life. Pensioner Concession Card holders and their families are eligible for free eye examinations with optometrists who bulk-bill Medicare – ask your optometrist if bulk-billing is available.

Free eye examinations are also provided through government eye hospitals and eye care clinics at selected public hospitals. However, there are extensive waiting times, as these are generally referred to as eye trauma centres (ie: for cases of severe accidents).

The major hospitals in Sydney are:

**Sydney Eye Hospital (02) 9382 7111**

**North Shore Hospital (02) 9926 7111**

If you live in other areas of NSW, speak to your doctor or call your local hospital to find the nearest eye clinic.

**TIPS:** A Teletypewriter service for people who are hearing and vision impaired is available on freecall **1800 810 586**.

## **NSW Government Spectacle Program (Administered by Vision Australia)**

The NSW Government Spectacle Program may provide free spectacles (complete – lenses and frame), once every two years, to people on Centrelink income support, and to others on low incomes who meet the Program's eligibility criteria. The criteria involves an income and assets based means test and residency qualifications. Applicants are required to organize their own eye examination and must submit a current Centrelink Income Statement with their application (two statements if a married/partnered couple). If you do not meet the criteria for free glasses, many optometrists may provide discounts or special purchase arrangements for pensioners and holders of the NSW Seniors Card (ask your local optometrist.)

The approved range of appliances includes frames (metal or plastic) and either single vision or bifocal lenses. Applicants may use their existing own frame or purchased frame. The use of certain own or purchased frames may incur an additional fitting fee, payable by the patient. Multifocals, Trifocals and non-prescription sunglasses are **not** included as approved items. Special Approval items (contact lenses, photochromatic lenses, transitions lenses and low vision aids) may be supplied at no charge, with appropriate prescriber justification. The decision to supply Special Approval items or non-Contract items at the Program's expense will be determined by the Program's Consulting Optometrist.

Application forms and details of the means test and other eligibility criteria are available through participating Program providers, optometrists and optical dispensers. For further enquiries contact related to Program eligibility, benefits and Provider locations/contacts, please ring Vision Australia 1300 847 466 [www.visionaustralia.org/spectacles](http://www.visionaustralia.org/spectacles) Email: [info@visionaustralia.org](mailto:info@visionaustralia.org)

### **For more information about Services:**

2RPH (Sydney's Radio Reading Service) [www.2rph.org.au](http://www.2rph.org.au) (02) 9518 8811

Australian Blind Sports Federation <http://www.blindsportsaustralia.com.au> (03) 8378 1137

Blind Sporting Association NSW <http://nican.com.au/service/blind-sporting-association-nsw> (02) 9638 7075

Blind Citizens Australia [www.bca.org.au](http://www.bca.org.au) (03) 9654 1400 or 1800 033 660

Guide Dogs NSW / ACT [www.guidedogs.com.au](http://www.guidedogs.com.au) (02) 9412 9300

NSW Ministerial Advisory Committee on Ageing [www.maca.nsw.gov.au](http://www.maca.nsw.gov.au) contact Office for Ageing: (02) 9248 0967

Optometrists Association NSW [www.oaansw.com.au](http://www.oaansw.com.au) (02) 9712 2199

Vision Australia [www.visionaustralia.org](http://www.visionaustralia.org) 1300 847 466