

**INQUIRY INTO THE EXERCISE OF THE FUNCTIONS OF
THE MOTOR ACCIDENTS AUTHORITY AND MOTOR
ACCIDENTS COUNCIL - TENTH REVIEW**

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30 April 2010

The Hon Christine Robertson MLC
Chair, Standing Committee on Law and Justice
Parliament of New South Wales
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Ms Robertson

Vision Australia appreciates this opportunity to respond to the NSW Standing Committee on Law and Justice Reviews of the Motor Accidents Authority (MAA) and the Lifetime Care and Support Authority (LTCSA) and their functions.

Vision Australia is the nation's premier provider of blindness and low vision services through comprehensive programs and activities including early childhood, orientation and mobility, employment, information, recreation and independent living services, advocacy services and Seeing Eye Dog services. We also work collaboratively with Government, business and community groups, to help raise awareness, promote public education and to eliminate social and economic barriers for people who are blind or vision impaired.

In NSW, we deliver services and support to more than 9,400 clients through our offices in Albury, Caringbah, Coffs Harbour, Enfield, Gosford, Lismore, Newcastle, Orange, Tamworth, Wagga Wagga and Wollongong. Additionally we provide low vision clinics, regional outreach and referrals from Sydney Eye Hospital, Armidale, Campbelltown, Dee Why, Kensington, Pennant Hills, Penrith, Bathurst, Bega, Bourke, Bowral, Broken Hill, Cobar, Dubbo, Forster-Tuncurry, Grafton, Griffith, Moruya, Mudgee, Newcastle, Nowra, Port Macquarie, Taree and Tweed Heads.

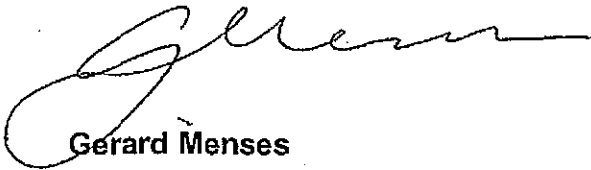
To aid the Committee's deliberations, Vision Australia has chosen to respond by referring to the Annual Reports of the MAA and the LTCSA under separate headings within this submission in the following pages. I have also included a recent media report concerning an accident which resulted in the death of a Vision Australia client in Bowral in March this year.

I would be pleased to provide further information or evidence, or to respond to any queries from Committee Members or support staff as required. In the first instance please contact Ms Linda Hornsey, Vision Australia Manager of Government Relations, on Linda.Hornsey@visionaustralia.org by email.

On behalf of the Vision Australia Board and the Executive, our employees, volunteers, partners and clients and their families I would like to acknowledge and thank the Committee for its previous and ongoing important work to improve and develop the functions of the MAA and the LTCSA.

I look forward to your response and wish the committee the best in its deliberations on these important matters.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gerard Menses', written in a cursive style.

Gerard Menses
Chief Executive Officer

Review of Motor Accidents Authority and the Motor Accidents Council

Vision Australia makes the following submission on behalf of blind and vision impaired clients and their families in NSW:

Green slips

Vision Australia notes that the unemployment rate for the vision impaired community is around 63%¹, resulting in them having a reduced capacity to meet the cost of Green Slips. Vision Australia submits that some people who are legally blind, while not being the driver, are registered owners of vehicles in NSW and we therefore support initiatives designed to reduce the costs of green slip prices. Additionally, Vision Australia notes the online green slip calculator is not easily accessed by people who are blind or vision impaired.

Accident notification system

Vision Australia submits that the largest barriers to applications included difficulties completing paper forms, problems accessing online applications through specialist technology, difficulties reading print material provided to them at interviews or in assessment centres, needing a drivers licence to comply with selection criteria, and encountering people who have preconceived ideas about the capabilities (or disabilities) of the applicant.

Competition review

Vision Australia acknowledges the need for competition as a means for increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery, and to help regulate costs for end users. Accordingly, Vision Australia supports the Motor Accidents Authority Competition Review and measures which reduce red tape and increase affordability and request that those measures are designed to include consideration of accessibility issues for people who are blind or vision impaired.

Relevant agencies and experts

Vision Australia is the nation's premier provider of blindness and low vision services. We provide early childhood, orientation and mobility, employment, information, recreation and independent living services, advocacy services and dog guide services. We also work collaboratively with Government, business and community groups, to help raise awareness, promote public education and to eliminate barriers for our clients in the community in respect of vehicle and pedestrian safety. Vision Australia asks that consideration be given to including our organization within the MAA Annual Report as a relevant agency and expert.

Technology

Vision Australia notes the Motor Accidents Authority is in the early stages of making technological improvements to streamline its case management system to allow for the electronic lodgement of forms, in the long term extending it to all users. Vision Australia would

¹ Research into Employment Levels in Australia' Robert Spriggs, Market Research & Development, Vision Australia (April 2007).

like to emphasise the need for consideration of appropriate approaches which allows vision impaired people to access and lodge information.

Improved management for high cost injuries

Vision Australia supports measures which appropriately meet the cost of people who are blinded or significantly vision impaired as the result of a motor accident. Vision Australia submits that good management of high cost injuries includes successful delivery of services that increase a person's orientation and mobility, living skills, communication and information access skills, to cope with vision loss or blindness incurred after a motor vehicle accident.

Early intervention measures to reduce long term costs

Vision Australia is looking to assist Government Departments and Agencies in implementing measures which can reduce the costs of managing injury, particularly for people who are blind or vision impaired. In March 2010, a Vision Australia client was killed in Bowral while attempting to cross a road. The driver of the vehicle was allegedly unaware of the vision impaired pedestrian's presence between the engine and trailer and unfortunately drove off. Vision Australia believes that further research and implementation of pedestrian safety initiatives will reduce the likelihood and risk of similar events occurring.