

4 May 2016

### **Diabetes Australia welcomes action on preventable diabetes-related blindness**

Funding for eye tests to help prevent diabetes-related blindness contained in the 2015-16 Federal Budget, is an important step towards ending one of diabetes' most debilitating complications, Diabetes Australia said today.

Diabetes Australia CEO A/Professor Greg Johnson said enhancing testing for diabetic retinopathy would benefit around 370,000 Australians at risk of preventable diabetes-related blindness.

"Diabetes is the leading cause of preventable blindness in Australia, this is tragedy that we can prevent with coordinated action," A/Professor Johnson said.

"Diabetes Australia has made this case to the Federal Government over a number of years and we are very pleased to see action on this critical issue. Funding of \$33.8 million, over four years, means around 370,000 people, roughly a quarter of whom will be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, will receive eye tests.

"People with diabetes should have their eyes checked every two years, and annually for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders – but too often this just doesn't happen and people with diabetes can go for many years without eye checks and turn up at hospitals with very serious, hard to treat eye problems" he said.

"We need to ensure that every Australian with diabetes gets their eyes checked according to the guidelines and this new funding will help.

"Diabetic retinopathy is a condition that will occur to the eyes of almost half of people with diabetes at some stage in their life so this is good news for everyone with diabetes."

Professor Johnson highlighted the focus on regional and remote communities saying it was important that people outside of metropolitan areas did not miss out.

"Rates of diabetes, and associated complications, are higher in regional and remote areas so we are very glad this funding is targeted at areas where there is limited access to testing," he said.

"The thing about diabetes-related blindness is that it can be prevented in up to 98% of cases.

"Better testing and detection means more people get the support they need and can avoid going blind.

"This averts the personal tragedy that is blindness as well as delivering huge, long-term savings to the health system.



**unite for diabetes**

Diabetes Australia is a member of the International Diabetes Federation  
Patron - His Excellency General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd)

“Diabetes is the single biggest challenge confronting the Australian health system costing around \$14.6 billion every single year and every dollar we invest in reducing that bill is a dollar well spent.”

The testing will involve using non-mydratic retinal cameras to take retinal photographs that can then be examined for signs of diabetic retinopathy.

*Diabetes Australia is the national body for people affected by all types of diabetes and those at risk. Diabetes Australia is committed to reducing the impact of diabetes. We work in partnership with diabetes health professionals, researchers and the community to minimise the impact of diabetes.*

**For information:** Liam Ferney, Diabetes Australia – 0448 130 925  
[liamf@diabetesqld.org.au](mailto:liamf@diabetesqld.org.au)



unite for diabetes