

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Call for strategic focus for Aussie eye health

7 February, 2019. A relatively modest but strategically-directed Federal Government investment will result in better vision and eye health for Australians, said the CEO of Optometry Australia Lyn Brodie today.

Optometry's national peak professional body has just lodged its 2019–2020 Budget Submission [Sustainability for optometry and primary eye health care](#).

It is calling for the Government to support readier access to primary eye care for middle-aged Australians, Australians living in rural and remote areas and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and investment in applied research to pilot innovative new models of care.

“Regular access to quality optometric care is an essential element to reduce the significant social and economic cost of preventable blindness and vision loss.

“With a prudent and relatively conservative investment, the Government can generate a positive – and almost immediate – impact on eye health for Australians, while reducing vision impairment,” Ms Brodie said.

“With more than 12 million Australians reporting a long-term eye condition, an ageing population and an increasing prevalence of chronic disease with associated eye pathology, it's vital for all Australians to have access to timely and affordable access to primary eye care.”

Optometrists play a crucial role in reducing the heavy social and economic cost of avoidable blindness and vision loss. More than eight million Australians already access eye care from an optometrist each year.

Optometry Australia members are vital in preventing, detecting and managing the development of ocular and systemic conditions that reduce productivity and require costly specialist care, she said.

Recommendations include:

- Reinstating Medicare rebates for biennial comprehensive initial eye exams for Australians aged between 45 and 64
- Ensuring access to sustainable and timely outreach eye care by expanding the Visiting Optometrists Scheme
- Investigating new models of care – for example, integrating optometry into primary care and collaborating with tertiary eye care services.

Key steps towards these essential goals will be achieved by a relatively modest \$11.56 million in 2019-20.

“These measures are vital to ensure access to quality eye care is maintained for all Australians, particularly for those who need it most.”

A government response is even more important as we approach the year 2020, which Optometry Australia has designated the Year of good vision for life – a one-off opportunity to focus attention on eye health. (The term 20/20 is used to express normal visual acuity).

**For more information:**

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Optometry Australia is the peak professional body for optometrists. Representing eight out of every 10 Australian-based optometrists, Optometry Australia's focus is to lead and advance the profession of optometry by putting eye-health front and centre of Australian health care.