



## Media Release

For Immediate Release

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### **Listen to the people Mr Turnbull! Eye care is at risk without a rebate increase**

**For the six million Australians who will have eye examinations in 2017, the Medicare rebate that they will receive will be less than they would have received in 2012, unless action is taken now to remove the freeze on indexation of optometry services.**

National President of Optometry Australia, Andrew Hogan, said the Medicare freeze penalises patients, and reduced funding for services puts the sustainability of optometry practices at risk.

“Year by year we are witnessing rebates falling significantly behind the real cost of providing clinical care. This must stop now, and we are calling on the Government to act in the interests of sustainable eye care and recognise that optometry is a core health service for Australians.

“Mr Turnbull, work with us to reduce the economic burden of vision impairment in Australia, not contribute to it,” Mr Hogan said.

“Many Australians simply can’t access the eye care that they need if they are forced to pay an out-of-pocket fee,” he said. “But the erosion of income is unsustainable for optometrists, and many find no alternative but to pass that cost on to patients.

“Why should Australians be disadvantaged by the policies of our Government, and why would the Government not want to be working proactively with optometrists to curtail the economic burden of vision impairment which is currently estimated at \$1.36 billion a month?

“We estimate that Government investment in primary eye health through Medicare has decreased around \$103 million since 2015.” Mr Hogan explained.

“Don’t just consider lifting the rebate on selected health services, such as GP services – listen to the 12 million Australians who are living with long-term eye conditions. Listen to the 18,000 Australians who signed a petition in October 2015 to lift the freeze on rebates for optometry services. Listen to the MPs whom we know have lobbied the Health Minister on this issue. Listen to our allied health professions. They all deserve to be heard,” Mr Hogan concluded.

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Optometry Australia is the peak professional body for optometrists. Representing eight out of every ten 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.