Provided by Vision Australia
By email, 9 May 2016

Note: Following the public hearing on 9 May 2016, Vision Australia provided the case study below to "exemplify the potential issues faced by a person diagnosed with permanent low vision, resulting from a serious injury incurred in a motor accident, and falling outside the legal definition of blindness".

Case Study

In 2005 I was diagnosed with a genetic eye condition called macular dystrophy. At the time of diagnosis, the technical definition of my vision loss was 6/36 (left eye) and 6/38 (right eye), which falls well outside the definition of legal blindness (6/60).

Because I was not legally blind at that time I was not eligible for a non-means tested pension, a travel pass and a number of other benefits.

I worked as an Office Manager at the time, which was a role involving a lot of data entry from faxed orders that were either hand written or typed in small font sizes (e.g. 10 or 11).

Following the diagnosis I required the following aides and equipment in the workplace. After these were put in place my productivity levels improved radically:
- A closed circuit television screen (CCTV) which magnifies and displays printed material on a screen, to read at a much larger magnification
- Magnification software (e.g. zoom text) which increases the size of the information displayed on a computer screen
- Hand held glass magnifiers, to help me with the preparation of product gift packs
- A new chair, without arm rests, so I could be placed closer to the screen at my desk

In 2012, my vision was re-tested and my Ophthalmologist issued a new vision report with very different vision acuities, which were now within the threshold of legal blindness (6/60 in the left eye, 6/95 in the right eye). I now work in another office-based role. I use all the same equipment that I had needed when I was diagnosed with low vision, but now I also use:
- a large print keyboard, and
- the audio function on my computer, so that the text is read to me (through headphones), as opposed to reading all the documents.