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## Media Release

### **A senior minister is necessary to oversee disability and aged care reforms**

Australian of the Year and National President Alzheimer's Australia, Ita Buttrose, warned that people with disabilities and older people would be denied access to vital support and services unless there is a commitment to coordinating the two reforms under the oversight of a senior minister.

Speaking today at a seminar on [Australia's Welfare 2013 Report](#), Ms Buttrose said, "While it is pleasing that the major parties and the Greens have supported the reforms, there is no recognition of the huge task ahead in their implementation."

To avoid a growing chasm between disability and aged care, Alzheimer's Australia and Vision Australia, are calling on the major parties to commit to coordinating the two reforms under the oversight of a senior minister.

"While the two reforms are moving in the same direction, there are significant differences in funding and philosophy. This has the potential to translate into a lack of access to services for some of the most vulnerable in our society," Ms Buttrose said.

"A well coordinated approach to the interrelationships between the two reforms will ensure that people of all ages will not fall between the cracks.

"For the 24,000 Australians with younger onset dementia there is little logic in someone aged 64 receiving very different support from someone aged 66.

"In the short term there is the possibility for these people of not knowing where to go and being rejected by both aged care and DisabilityCare for assistance."

Blind Paralympian, adventurer and Special Projects Manager with Vision Australia, Gerrard Gosens OAM agreed and said, "Disability support for people with a vision impairment aged over 65 years does not fall under the health care, disability care or aged care systems."

Blindness and low vision is an issue that predominantly affects people as they age and mostly cannot be treated. At least 1 in 16 people over 65 develop irreversible vision loss, growing to more than 1 in 7 over the age of 90.

The aged care system is aimed at frailty and residential care - not disability.

"Even once the current *Living Longer. Living Better.* reform package is fully implemented, only 125 persons out of every 1,000 people seeking support will get it- which means those with disability related support needs will find themselves constantly at the back of the queue," Mr Gosens said.

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**National Dementia Helpline: 1800 100 500**

**An interpreter service is available**

(The National Dementia Helpline is an Australian Government Initiative)

**Dementia is a National health priority Area**

[www.fightdementia.org.au](http://www.fightdementia.org.au)

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