

## **CARERS GUIDE PROVIDES INVALUABLE SUPPORT**

### ***MD Foundation Launches New Booklet for Carers of the Blind and Vision Impaired***

The Macular Degeneration Foundation is launching the new publication *Family, Friend and Carer – A Guide* to recognise the outstanding contribution of family, friends and carers to those who are blind or have low vision and the need for a guide to support them in their vital work.

Family, friends and carers are an integral part of the support system for people who are blind or have low vision. For the carer, it is important to have the right tools to approach the role, feel confident and to maintain their own personal health and wellbeing.

*Family, Friend and Carer – A Guide* assists and guides carers to adopt appropriate strategies and be well informed on when and where to access help and support. While Macular Degeneration (MD) is the leading cause of blindness and severe vision loss in Australia, the other four major eye diseases are also affecting our ageing Australian population. *Family, Friend and Carer – A Guide* has therefore been produced to be used by carers of patients with all types of vision impairment.

Performer and writer Jean Kittson has had first-hand experience at the affect vision loss can have on a family member when her mother Elaine was diagnosed with MD.

“The challenge is to maintain the quality of life and independence both for people with vision loss and for those who care for them,” says Ms Kittson.

“My mother was always vital and independent. She is still vital, goodness knows, but Macular Degeneration means that she must rely on my father for many of her day-to-day needs. Everyday activities such as shopping or even enjoying a walk have become frustrating and difficult for her. In particular, losing the ability to read is a great loss because reading has always brought her so much pleasure.”

Ms Julie Heraghty, Chief Executive Officer of the Macular Degeneration Foundation, stresses the importance of ensuring that the carer has adequate support and access to services and information for carers.

“Given that MD affects the ageing population, the role as a carer often falls into the hands of elderly husbands or wives who are struggling to cope with many life changes as well as this new role as a carer,” says Ms Heraghty.

“*Family, Friend and Carer – A Guide* clearly helps the carer to map out a care plan to ensure that the person with low vision can maintain their quality of life and independence – and the carer is supported in the process.”

The booklet is the second in a series of publications available from the Macular Degeneration Foundation and is preceded by *Low Vision – A Guide*, which offers a practical approach for people of all ages who are blind or vision impaired. *Family, Friend and Carer – A Guide* will be launched by NSW Minister for Ageing and Minister for Disability Services, the Hon. Kristina Keneally, at 10:00am at Parliament House on Thursday, 10 April 2008.

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#### **INTERVIEW AND PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES WILL BE AVAILABLE**

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