

Level 3

Ross House

247-251 Flinders Lane

Melbourne Victoria 3000

Telephone: 03 9654 1400

Toll Free: 1800 033 660

Fax: 03 9650 3200

Email: bca@bca.org.au

Website: www.bca.org.au

Blind Citizens Australia ABN 90 006 985 226. Gifts are Tax Deductible.

Blind Citizens Australia

Senator the Hon Mathias Korman

PO Box 6100

Senate

Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600

15/08/2017

Dear Senator Korman,

Blind Citizens Australia (BCA), the national representative organisation of blind and vision impaired Australians, commends the Prime Minister for confirming that the upcoming postal vote on marriage equality will be accessible to “all Australians”. We are writing to seek your assurance that the 350,000 Australians who are blind or vision impaired will receive information about the process in a format they can access and that they will be able to cast an independent and secret vote.

BCA members have told us that they are passionate about the upcoming postal vote on marriage equality. So, it is important that they have the same opportunity to participate in the postal voting process in an independent manner as other Australians.

People who are blind or vision impaired are often unable to cast their vote independently, although election processes are increasingly conducted with accessibility in mind. It is unclear to BCA what accessibility arrangements are in place for people who are blind or vision impaired for the upcoming postal vote. The Australian Bureau of Statistics were contacted by BCA on Thursday, 10th August in an attempt to seek clarification on this. However, no response has yet been received.

It is essential that the votes of people who are blind or vision impaired are cast secretly, and that these votes be verifiable through a process which maintains confidentiality. People who are sighted take this right for granted. People who are blind or vision impaired are particularly at risk of having their wishes disregarded if they cannot cast their vote in a way that guarantees their choices are respected.

BCA requests that plans to ensure accessibility of the postal vote be made clear as soon as possible, so that people who are blind or vision impaired are able to cast their vote on this important issue independently and confidentially.

BCA welcomes the opportunity to assist with making the postal voting process accessible to people who are blind or vision impaired.

Yours sincerely



Emma Bennison

Executive Officer

Blind Citizens Australia

Phone: 03 9654 1400

Email: emma.bennison@bca.org.au