



August 27, 2007

*Ending the isolation.*

## **Dramatic figures reveal nearly 40,000 West Australians are vision impaired with additional disabilities**

DRAMATIC figures identified by the Senses Foundation (Inc) and released today in a report launched by Disability Services Minister, the Hon. Sheila McHale, reveal that **nearly 40,000 West Australians are vision impaired with additional disabilities, a figure that far exceeds initial estimates of 5,000.**

That finding was released with the launch of the 'Unseen and Unheard' report by the Minister at Burswood this afternoon. The study was commissioned by the Senses Foundation, the primary advocate for West Australians who are deafblind\* or blind with an additional disability.

The research, which also revealed nearly 9,000 West Australians are both deaf and blind, was undertaken by high profile public health researcher, Paula Dyke, as part of Senses Foundation's strategic plan.

Senses Foundation Chief Executive Officer, Debbie Karasinski, says the findings have big implications for disability services throughout Western Australia.

"The findings of this research are sure to have big implications for organisations, both government and non-government, that provide services to people who are deafblind or blind with an additional disability," Ms Karasinski says.

"Other significant findings are that an **enormous 40% of identified people live in regional areas**, 25% in more remote areas and very significantly, half have a profound or severe disability.

"Other research has already identified that people who are deafblind have more difficulty accessing services than any other disability group due to a number of barriers.

"What we know now is that there are up to 40,000 people throughout the state who are severely isolated in their day to day lives because of communication barriers and who have insufficient access to services.

"Senses Foundation will be now set out to address this issue."

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\* Deafblindness is a unique disability resulting from the combination of both hearing and vision loss or impairment.



**For further comment contact Senses Foundation CEO Debbie Karasinski on 9473 5400 or 0412722788.**