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**Media Release**

NZ On Air responds to the needs of blind and vision-impaired television viewers

Blind Citizens NZ congratulates NZ On Air for recognising the significance of television as both a social and cultural medium in the lives of blind and vision impaired people. The injection of an additional $400k will make a significant difference to the amount of audio described content available for blind and vision impaired viewers and, captioning for the Deaf and hard of hearing.

“In the past 12 months, the number of audio described hours of content produced by Able for TV ONE and TV2 has increased from 15 to around 30 per week”, says the National President of Blind Citizens NZ, Clive Lansink. “But much of this is targeted at ‘prime time’ viewing whereas television is available 24/7 across a multitude of options.”

Being unable to follow body language, movement on the screen, scenery changes, facial expressions, clothing and manner of dress etc, blind, deafblind and vision impaired people benefit from audio description because it provides a commentary on these aspects of the visual experience. Launched in New Zealand in March 2011, audio description is in its infancy in New Zealand while internationally, it has existed for some 30 years.

“Blind and vision impaired television viewers want and need more audio described television content. We welcome the new funding because it will give us access to a wider range of content and a lot more viewing hours on these two channels. With the increase in hours we look forward to Able continuing to produce a high quality, audio described service that is envied by our Australian counterparts,” said Clive Lansink.

Audio description can be received on all television receivers displaying the Freeview logo, and on SKY, Igloo and Vodafone TV (formerly Telstra Clear) decoders. This means anyone who needs it can benefit from audio description when it is being broadcast.

**About Blind Citizens NZ**

Founded in 1945, the Association of Blind Citizens of New Zealand Inc (Blind Citizens NZ) is New Zealand's leading blindness consumer organisation and one of the country's largest organisations of disabled consumers. Blind Citizens NZ’s aim is to heighten awareness of the rights of blind and vision impaired people and to remove the barriers that impact upon their ability to live in an accessible, equitable and inclusive society. Ends

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