

INNOVATION & IMPACT



2023-2024 ANNUAL REPORT



National peak
body
for the eye health
& vision care
sector.



**We respect and honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Elders past, present and future.**

**We acknowledge the stories, traditions and cultures
of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and
recognise their continuing connection to land, waters
and community.**

Artwork by Timothy Buckley - Iris, 2022

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The national
peak body
for eye health
and vision care.



About Us

Vision 2020 Australia is the national peak body for eye health and vision care.

Our mission is to prevent avoidable vision loss and improve opportunities and outcomes for people living with blindness or low vision. We do this by working to ensure that eye health and vision care remains high on the health, disability and international development agendas of Australian governments.

Vision 2020 Australia works with member organisations, governments and other relevant stakeholders to develop effective policy solutions focused on improving eye health and vision.

Our member organisations have the knowledge and expertise to identify the crucial issues that need to be addressed for improved eye health outcomes and come together through Vision 2020 Australia to speak with a united voice.

We advocate

We articulate and reflect our sector's views and, with the aim of improving equity and participation:

- We influence, through proactive policy development and problem solving
- We leverage government, and public and private sectors
- We walk with, and are led by the priorities of, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples organisations and communities
- We are guided by people with lived experience.

In our advocacy, we acknowledge Australia as an international leader in eye health, and therefore:

- We collaborate with our members and work in partnership with international aid entities to ensure vision and eye health matters are advanced in the international arena
- We leverage the Australian government's international support for vision issues
- We provide a forum for collaboration and information exchange for the benefit of our members and all Australians.

We build awareness

We communicate with the aim of increasing eye health and vision care knowledge in all related sectors, as well as the general public:

- We make issues relating to eye health visible to varied audiences
- We generate and aggregate evidence on eye health and vision care
- We highlight areas for improvement in services and participation for people who are blind or have low vision.

In our awareness building, we do so in ways that:

- Capture multiple perspectives, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples voices and those with lived experience of blindness and low vision
- Engage with, and build on, the successful communications and activities of our members.

2023 - 2024 Snapshot

OUR YEAR OF IMPACT



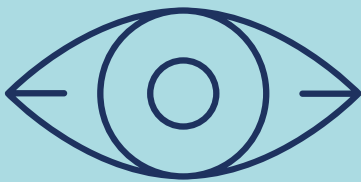
21

submissions,
reports and
policy papers
delivered.



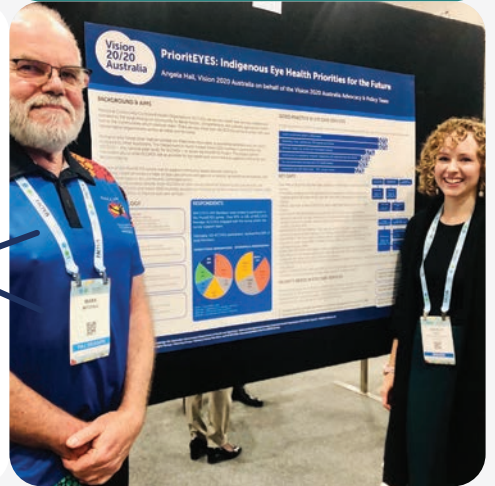
368

eye checks for
politicians and
parliament staff.



fifty-one

media mentions, with a
potential audience
reach of
3.1 million
people.



over one hundred

meetings with
politicians, advisors,
department
representatives and
sector leaders.



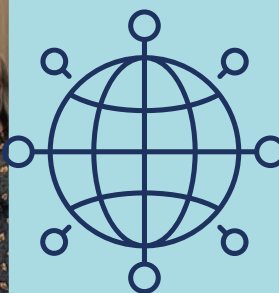
158%

increase in
audience
engagement
through
Facebook
posts.



50%+

average open rate of
our Sector News Alert,
28% higher than
the industry
average.



79%

increase in
LinkedIn
followers.

Chair's Message

Innovation and Impact is a fitting theme for this year's annual report as we have celebrated and showcased over the past 12 months the opportunities created by our members, who are pioneering ways to improve equity and access of eye health and services to prevent, manage and treat vision loss, as well as the full participation of people who are blind or have low vision.

There was no finer example of this than our Innovation in Eye Health and Vision Care cocktail function and exhibition at Parliament House in Canberra, which showcased companies and organisations who are leading the way to innovate in eye health technology and consumer support services. Every one of them is playing a role to either improve health access, increase disease detection and prevention or enable full participation. I was delighted to welcome Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme, The Hon Bill Shorten, who reaffirmed his commitment to engaging with the sector for people who are blind or have low vision. I thank the co-chairs of our Parliamentary Friends Group for Eye Health and Vision Care, Meryl Swanson MP and the Hon David Gillespie MP, for their support and advocacy. It is truly now our flagship event which continues to grow every year.



We have successfully broadened our advocacy impact over the year, making real gains across state and territory governments. We launched our first ever state-based Parliamentary Friends Group in New South Wales, and have built relationships with Health, Education and Disability ministers and advisors across South Australia, Victoria, Queensland, New South Wales and Tasmania. This work has yielded results already, with the Victorian Government tripling the reach of the Glasses4Kids program, and the South Australian Government committing to expand the GlassesSA program to reach an additional 7000 people each year.

Federally, our relationships remain strong to ensure our collective voice is heard, and our Committees have continued their valuable input to deliver more robust policies, strategies and submissions to improve eye health and vision care for all Australians and across the region.

It has also been a year of increased facilitation, collaboration and networking across the membership. Greater collaboration is critical in achieving equitable, accessible and quality eye care for all Australians and in August last year, myself and CEO, Carly Iles, hosted RANZCO and Optometry Australia for a day of discussion about collaborative care in eye health, which led to a new collaborative eye care working group comprising of RANZCO, Optometry Australia and Orthoptics Australia being established, with paediatric eye care as the first area of focus.

I was thrilled to be reappointed to the Board of Vision 2020 Australia for another term and re-elected as Chair. The Board has prioritised strengthening organisational governance, including the modernisation of the Vision 2020 Australia Constitution and enhancing the Board composition so that it possesses the skills, expertise and characteristics that is reflective of the eye health and vision care sector and our diverse membership, which is at the largest level in the organisation's history.

The Board welcomed the addition of Kylie Harris, Leah Cameron, Damian Papps, Brandon Ah Tong and Dr Kris Rallah-Baker, and I give my thanks to the outgoing Directors, Jaki Adams, Shaun Tatipata and Jessica Gallagher for their long-standing dedication to the organisation, and I was honoured to introduce Jessica to deliver this year's Barry Jones Vision Oration.

I would like to thank all of those who have helped us in our achievements this year. Carly and the Vision 2020 Australia team, our Board, Committee members and of course, our membership. Our members remain at the centre of Vision 2020's endeavours and our ambitious strategy cannot be achieved without them. I thank you for your ongoing support to ensure our voice is unified, authoritative and dedicated to improving eye health and vision care.

The Hon Christopher Pyne
Board Chair



“We have successfully broadened our advocacy impact over the year, making real gains across state and territory governments.”

CEO's Message

As CEO of Vision 2020 Australia, it is with pride that I reflect on the achievements of the past year. In partnership with our members, stakeholders, and the broader sector, we have made significant strides in advancing our strategic priorities.

The past 12 months have been a time of growth, innovation, and deepened impact across the sector. Our advocacy and policy efforts have reached new heights, notably through cross-sector submissions that shaped key federal initiatives such as the Independent Review of the NDIS, the Foundations of the New Aged Care Act, and the International Gender Equality Strategy. These collaborations demonstrate our commitment to driving systemic change that benefits Australians with vision loss.

We've strengthened our relationships across government, engaging with ministers and key departments to champion the needs of people who are blind or have low vision. From discussions with the Minister for the NDIS to providing expert advice on assistive technologies and commercial media accessibility, our work is ensuring that vision loss is front and centre in policy development. This includes presenting at the Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme and holding over 100 meetings with our members to ensure our advice to government is well-informed and consistent.

These successes underscore our capacity to drive change in eye health and vision care at both federal and state levels. Notably is the federal government's implementation of the majority of recommendations from the MBS Review Taskforce on Optometry and Ophthalmology. In the past 12 months we have also established productive relationships with health ministers across most states and have built awareness through the continued roll-out of parliamentary eye screenings.

At the heart of our achievements is the power of collaboration. I have always believed that our greatest strength lies in the diverse perspectives, knowledge, and expertise that our members bring to the table. Vision 2020 Australia is, at its core, a collective - working with, and for, our members. This unity has enabled us to amplify our influence and speak with a unified voice that gains attention from policymakers and decision-makers at every level of government. This was encapsulated by our leader symposium that focused on Children's Eye Health and Vision Care. Opportunities such as these offers the opportunity for frank discussion with our members to unpack tangible solutions to current and future challenges.

We remain staunchly committed to the journey of being a stronger ally to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, reflected in the ongoing development of the organisation's Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

A personal highlight this year was to welcome International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) President, Caroline Casey, to launch World Sight Day 2024 in Australia, alongside co-Chair of our NSW Parliamentary Friends Group for Eye Health and Vision Care, Tim James MP. Our World Sight Day activities grow each year and this year was no different, with three successful events across three states.

I express my gratitude to our Chair, The Hon Christopher Pyne, and our Board Directors who, through their wisdom, guidance and support, positively progress our organisation and cause.



To the four Committees, their Chairs, and the entire membership – your input and expertise has ensured that we have developed salient policy positions that deliver solutions to inequities in access to eye care services. A healthy membership is critical to enhancing the reach, relevance and effectiveness of our advocacy efforts that benefit the whole sector.

Finally, I'd like to acknowledge the dedicated and energetic people that make up the Vision 2020 Australia team. We are a small, but mighty team and what has been achieved by them is testament to their ongoing effort and passion.

I am filled with optimism about what we will achieve over the next 12 months. Our work is far from over, but with the continued support of our members and partners, we can continue to shape a future where everyone has access to quality eye care, and people who are blind or have low vision can fully participate in society.

Carly Iles
CEO



“At the heart of our achievements is the power of collaboration...our greatest strength lies in the diverse perspectives, knowledge, and expertise that our members bring to the table.”

Our Board (2023-2024)

THE HON CHRISTOPHER PYNE CHAIR

The Hon Christopher Pyne is Chairman of Pyne and Partners and a Professor in the UniSA Business School amongst other appointments.

Christopher served as a member of Federal Parliament from 1993-2019, leading reforms across the Ageing, Education, Industry Innovation and Science, Defence Industry and Defence portfolios.

Christopher's father, Remington, was a past President of RANZCO, contributing to the creation of the first National Trachoma and Eye Health Program. Christopher has witnessed firsthand, particularly in Indigenous communities, the work of the eye sector and is keen to ensure it receives the support it deserves.

JANE SCHULLER DEPUTY CHAIR

Jane has 25 years' experience in eye health care. She is a qualified orthoptist in both Australia and the USA and has had 10 years' experience in large teaching eye hospitals and private ophthalmology practices in Singapore, Bangkok and the USA. She is President of Orthoptics Australia, past Victorian Chair and has held a number of other state and federal roles. In 2019, she completed the Australian Institute of Company Directors, Directors Course. She continues to work at the Royal Melbourne Hospital and in several private ophthalmology practices.

A/PROF KRISTOPHER RALLAH-BAKER

Dr Rallah-Baker is Australia's first and currently only Indigenous ophthalmologist. A proud Yuggera and Biri-Gubba man, Kris is a highly respected ophthalmologist and is one of the founding members of the Australian Indigenous Doctors Association, a Director on the Board of the Nova Peris Foundation, and founding member and Director of the Board of the First Nations Eye Health Alliance.

Kris brings a broad base of experience from within clinical ophthalmology, particularly rural and remote ophthalmology, both across Australia and internationally.

DALE CLEAVER

Dale Cleaver is the CEO of Guide Dogs NSW/ACT. He was first appointed to the Vision 2020 Australia Board in 2019 and co-opted in March, 2023.

Dale's history of working in the health, not for profit and charity sectors includes positions as CEO of Campbell Page (National Provider of Employment Services), CEO of the Royal District Nursing Service South Australia (SA) and prior to this, 17 years with The Australian Red Cross including roles as Acting CEO and National Chief Operating Officer.

He has a professional passion for making a difference and empowering people with disabilities, and has experience in strategic, operational and transformational change to further increasing the quality of service-based organisations.

BRANDON AH TONG

Brandon has 20 years' experience working in the eye health sector as an advocacy expert and is currently the Director of Policy & Advocacy with The Fred Hollows Foundation. His area of work has spanned the human rights of people living with blindness or low vision. This includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander eye health and global eye health. He has had the privilege of being a commissioner with the 2021 Lancet Global Health Commission on Global Eye Health.

Living with blindness, Brandon brings a perspective that bridges the imperative to address avoidable blindness with the dignity of living with vision-related disability.

KYLIE HARRIS

Kylie is the Director of Operations at the Australian College of Optometry. Starting her healthcare career as an optometrist, she has held numerous Board positions within eye health. From 2016 to 2020, she served on the Optometry Australia board, during which she was appointed Deputy President in 2018. Prior to her term at Optometry Australia, Kylie served two separate terms on the Optometry Victoria board, and notably held the position of President for the state organisation from 2013 to 2016. She currently holds the position of Sight for All Vice Chair.

Kylie is passionate about establishing sustainable and inclusive care models for all Australians.

Our Board (2023-2024)

LEAH CAMERON

Leah is a Trawlwoolway (Palawa) woman from Tasmania and is the founder and principal solicitor of Marrawah Law.

Since forming the firm in 2013, her philosophy of doing law differently has been the driving force behind Marrawah Law's growth into one of the largest Indigenous owned and operated law firm in Australia. Leah was recently appointed as one of the independent experts on the esteemed Australian Heritage Council.

Leah is both highly effective in commercial legal practice and influential across government and corporate Australia in advocating for social change.

CLIN A/PROF NITIN VERMA

Nitin is Past President of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (RANZCO) and longtime Board Director. He is also a Director of the Macular Disease Foundation of Australia. He has been active both locally and internationally through involvement in establishing the eye health program in Timor L'este.

During his tenure as RANZCO President he oversaw the implementation of the Vision 2030 and beyond plan, which aims to enhance equitable service provision across Australia and develop and maintain a sustainable ophthalmology workforce, with the goal of working towards eliminating avoidable blindness in Australia.

DR KATE REID

Dr Reid has provided 15 years of service to public Ophthalmology at Canberra Hospital, where she was instrumental in funding Eye Clinic infrastructure projects in excess of \$4 million, and initiating patient co-management with both public and private Optometry.

She is an experienced educator, inaugurating then leading the ANU Medical Student Ophthalmology Program for a decade. She is a regular presenter of her research at scientific conferences. Now in private practice, Dr Reid continues her research interests in neuro-ophthalmology, and her advocacy for utilising limited public Ophthalmology resources as efficiently as possible.

FIONA WOODS

Fiona is the President of Blind Citizens Australia and has been a Director since 2017.

Fiona has also held positions with the National Women's Branch, has chaired the National Policy Council and led the development of BCA's Expectations of Service Providers, which sets out what we believe people who are blind and vision impaired should expect when they access services designed for them. In addition, Fiona was a graduate of the first Executive Leadership Program.

Fiona is a passionate advocate for growing awareness of vision impairment, blindness and inclusion, and that access to and knowledge of eye health should not depend on socio-economic or geographical factors.

DAMIAN PAPPS

Damian is the Executive Director of See Differently and has a strong commitment to social impact and mission driven initiatives. He has three decades of global financial services experience with skills in strategy development, governance and corporate advice.

Damian is a Fellow of Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand and is an experienced Director having served on several Boards.

Since 2011 he has specialised in Healthcare, with a focus on Aged Care and Retirement Living, hospitals, pharmacy, medical specialists, general practice and disability services.



Committee Highlights

Vision and Eye Care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Committee

Over the 2023-2024 year The Vision and Eye Care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Committee (VECATSIPC) undertook thoughtful introspection while steadfastly advocating for improved access and equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The committee supported Vision 2020 Australia in refining its approach to allyship and fostering stronger partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, communities, and organisations. This commitment will guide our future endeavours and relationships. Key efforts include bi-monthly meetings with the Commonwealth Department of Health, regular meetings with NACCHO and the First Nations Eye Health Alliance, a mentorship program to increase First Nations representation on the Committee, and the development of an Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan. Advocacy was also bolstered through participation in significant conferences and events.

I am honoured to have taken on the role of Committee Chair in March 2024 for the 2024-25 committee term, following the impactful tenure of Associate Professor Kris Rallah-Baker, whose leadership from 2020 to 2023 has significantly shaped our strategic course.

This year Vision 2020 Australia continued to advocate for improved equity in access to eye care services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in all Ministerial engagements. Bi-monthly meetings with the Indigenous Health Team of the Commonwealth Department of Health have been instrumental in discussing and prioritising eye health initiatives for First Nations communities.

We were also actively engaged in building and strengthening mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations through strategic initiatives, including regular meetings with NACCHO and the First Nations Eye Health Alliance to enhance collaborative efforts within the sector and the development of a Vision 2020 Australia Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

In 2023, VECATSIPC launched a mentorship program aimed at increasing representation of First Nations people within the Committee. This initiative seeks to provide mentorship, insights into the eye health sector, and exposure to the governance and

operations of national committees.

Our advocacy efforts were further strengthened through participation at key events, including the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health Conference and the National Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners Member Meeting. In addition, the participation of Vision 2020 Australia in the 4th World Congress of Optometry Conference showcased our commitment to promoting the eye care needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through impactful research and community engagement.

I extend my gratitude to all VECATSIPC members and their proxies for their unwavering commitment and invaluable contributions to advancing eye health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

A/Prof Peter Malouf

Incoming Committee Chair, 2024

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chris Reksinis	Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia
Josephine Li	Australian College of Optometry
Colina Waddell	Brien Holden Foundation
Rosie Dawkins	Centre for Eye Research Australia (CERA)
Michele Clewett	Centre for Eye Research Australia (CERA) (2024)
Nicole Leonardis	Eye Bank Australia and NZ (2023)
Remy Di Ponio	Foresight (2024)
Jeremy Anderson	Guide Dogs NSW/ACT
Jaklinna Michael	Guide Dogs Victoria (2023)
Kris Rallah-Baker	IDEAS Van (2023)
Mitchell Anjou	Indigenous Eye Health Unit, University of Melbourne (2023)
Angus Turner	Lions Eye Institute (2023)
Sue Silveira	NextSense (2024)
Fiona Crimmins	OneSight(2023)
Sarah Davies	Optometry Australia
Amanda French	Orthoptics Australia (2023)
Ben Whitham	Orthoptics Australia (2024)
Laura Ferreira	The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists
Jo Croft	Sight for All
Leanne Turner	The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital (2023)
Renee Chmielewski	The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital (2023)
Vincent Bin Dol	The Fred Hollows Foundation
Layal Naji	University of Canberra, School of Optometry and Vision Science (2023)
Jaya Sowjanya Siddireddy	University of Canberra, School of Optometry and Vision Science (2024)
Kathleen Watt	UNSW School of Optometry and Vision Science (2023)
Peter Malouf	UNSW School of Optometry and Vision Science (2024)
Khyber Alam	University of Western Australia
Noela Prasad	VACCHO (2023)
Gwyn Low	VACCHO (2024)
Jodie Cox	Vision Australia (2023)
Amelia Ukovic	Vision Australia (2024)

COMMITTEE PROXIES

Robyn Cooper	Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia (2023)
Kate West	Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia (2024)
Pete Haydon	Australian College of Optometry
Georgia Bennett	Brien Holden Vision Institute (2024)
Sarah Holland	Centre for Eye Health (2024)
A/Prof Peter van Wijngaarden	Centre for Eye Research Australia (CERA) (2023)
Nick Hockley	Deakin University (2024)
Geoffrey Painter	Foresight (2024)
Elisha Roberts	Guide Dogs Queensland (2024)
Gwyn Low	Guide Dogs Victoria (2023)
Lose Fonua	Indigenous Eye Health Unit, University of Melbourne (2023)
Emma Stanford	Indigenous Eye Health Unit, University of Melbourne (2024)
Christine Stott	Lions Eye Institute (2023)
Wayne Hogan	OneSight (2023)
Skye Cappuccio	Optometry Australia
Lini Li	Orthoptics Australia (2024)

Prevention and Early Intervention Committee

The Prevention and Early Intervention Committee met three times in 2023-2024. Key activities included advocacy at Federal, State, and Territory governmental levels for the roll out of the Children's Vision Screening Framework, launching a mental wellbeing resources guide for healthcare practitioners caring for people who are blind or have vision loss, and facilitating the formation of a multidisciplinary group for paediatric collaborative care.

During the 2023–24 year the Committee focussed on three primary areas: promoting the National Framework for Vision Screening in 3.5-5-year-olds, enhancing mental wellbeing supports for people with vision loss, and advancing collaborative care as a means of improving eye care pathways and access.

The Vision 2020 Australia National Framework for Vision Screening in 3.5-5-year-olds aims to ensure that vision problems in children are detected and managed before school commencement. Throughout the year, Vision 2020 Australia and Committee Members continued advocacy efforts at both federal and state and territory levels. This includes a submission to the Early Years Strategy, consultations with stakeholders such as UNICEF, engagements with Parliamentarians and Advisors, and a panel event on children's vision held at Parliament House in Canberra and attended by the Federal Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care, Ged Kearney. The efforts and activities over the past year have gained significant momentum, prompting state governments to consider necessary changes to improve access to and coverage of screening.

The Mental Wellbeing and Vision Loss Project is a shared priority with the Vision 2020 Australia Independence and Participation Committee. Guided by the Mental Wellbeing and Vision Loss Working Group, we launched an online guide of mental wellbeing resources. The Resource Guide can be found on the Vision 2020 Australia website.

A collaboration with the Mental Health Professional Online Development group was also established to develop video resources to educate health professionals and related workforce about the mental health challenges associated with vision loss. Finally, posters were presented at the OMEGA

optometry conference and at the World Association of Eye Hospitals Conference in partnership with the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital.

On the collaborative care front, Optometry Australia, Orthoptics Australia, and RANZCO established a multidisciplinary working group to progress paediatric collaborative care models; this followed a meeting facilitated by Vision 2020 Australia in August 2023. Many Committee Members are actively involved in collaborative care practice and initiatives, including RANZCO's recent collaborative care workshops. Vision 2020 Australia continues to engage with these Members to identify strategies that will support the expansion of collaborative models and develop advocacy priorities which will enhance equity and accessibility in eyecare.

As always, thank you to all Committee members for your time, assistance, and contributions over the past year.

Dr Nellie Deen

Committee Chair for the 2023-24 period

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Amanda French	Orthoptics Australia
Carol Wynne	Indigenous Eye Health Unit, University of Melbourne
Cesar Carrillo	Sight for All
Colina Waddell	Brien Holden Foundation
Elisse Higginbotham	University of Western Australia
Gerhard Schlenther	Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists
Gregory Harper	Keratoconus Australia
Guy Gillor	Indigenous Eye Health, University of Melbourne (2023)
Jennifer Doggett	Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists
Jeremy Hill	Guide Dogs Queensland
Jessie Huang-Lung	UNSW School of Optometry and Vision Science
Kerryn Hart	Deakin University
Leighton Boyd	Retina Australia
Lisa Lombardi	Centre for Eye Research Australia (CERA) (2023)
Lisa Nivison-Smith	UNSW School of Optometry and Vision Science
Meera Chandra	Macular Disease Foundation Australia
Mei Ying Boon	University of Canberra, School of Vision Science and Optometry
Michael Yapp	Optometry Australia
Nellie Deen	Australia College of Optometry
Noela Prasad	VACCHO (2023)
Richard Wylie	Glaucoma Australia (2023)
Sarah Holland	Guide Dogs NSW/ACT

COMMITTEE PROXIES

A/Prof Peter van Wijngaarden	Centre for Eye Research Australia (2023)
Abe Ropitini	VACCHO (2023)
Amy Lim	University of Western Australia
Cesar Carrillo	Sight for All
Elise Roberts	Guide Dogs Queensland
Emma Stanford	Indigenous Eye Health Unit, University of Melbourne
Faran Sabeti	University of Canberra, School of Vision Science and Optometry
Georgia Bennett	Brien Holden Foundation
Isabelle Jalbert	UNSW School of Optometry and Vision Science
Jane Cowen	Orthoptics Australia
Judy Hatswell	Sight for All
Larry Kornhauser	Keratoconus Australia
Legend Lee	Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (2023)
Linda Robinson	Deakin University
Margaret Lum	Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists
Mark Choo	Macular Disease Foundation Australia
Matt Trinh	UNSW School of Optometry and Vision Science

Independence and Participation Committee

This year, the Committee held three full meetings and five additional discussions, during which key achievements were celebrated and important topics were considered. We analysed major reports from the Disability Royal Commission, NDIS Review, and Aged Care Taskforce, focusing on how these reforms could affect those with vision loss, particularly the elderly.

Collaborations with Australian Communications consumer Action Network (ACCAN) and other stakeholders highlighted the importance of digital accessibility and influenced significant discussions with government officials. The year concluded with our input being reflected in communications from the Federal Government, demonstrating the Committee's growing influence in shaping policy. In our first meeting we enjoyed a moment of celebration, following the launch of Audio Description on ABC's iView catchup service.

NDIA Board Director Graeme Innes offered a well-received presentation to the Committee about the Agency's changing approach to decision making. Building relationships with key figures in the sector is another way for us to increase our influence in a busy reform environment.

This year saw the release of three major reports which will guide the Government's reform agenda for years to come. The Committee was provided with prompt analysis of key recommendations by the Disability Royal Commission, the NDIS Review, and the Aged Care Taskforce, and has been considering how these mostly broad proposals might affect our cohort.

Given the majority of people with vision loss are over 65, planned reforms to Aged Care will have a major impact on our sector. The Aged Care Taskforce report, suggested a greater reliance on co-contributions in the future. While details of the proposed funding approach were not included in the exposure draft of the new Aged Care Act, our submission emphasised the need for a fair and simple approach which funded vision service providers to deliver key rehabilitation supports as early as possible.

There was good news in the exposure draft, with people who are blind or have low vision acknowledged for the first time as a group who

might require specialist support in the new Aged Care Act's proposed principles.

Governments, businesses, and universities often develop or buy websites, apps and other digital products that are inaccessible to people who are blind or have low vision. Through conversations with the ACCAN, we identified some key recommendations from the Disability Royal Commission that might improve obligations on businesses and governments around digital accessibility. A working group, co-led by V2020A and ACCAN, has been exploring how to raise awareness of these recommendations and ensure they are implemented by Governments.

Input from that group informed a presentation at this year's Roundtable on Information Access for People with Print Disabilities. Some of these recommendations, including those relating to Audio Description, were also raised in a fruitful meeting with Minister for Communications Michelle Rowland and her advisors.

The Independent Review of the NDIS suggested major changes to the scheme, which are to be introduced over a five-year transition period. We've already taken opportunities to influence that reform process, building on the Review's recommendations around foundational supports, and have proposed an early intervention program for children in our Federal Budget submission. Our submission in response to another recommendation relating to mandatory registration of all NDIS service providers was directly quoted in advice to the Minister.

The year ended with an appearance before the Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS, during which the complexity of accessing vision support and evidence of disability for participants living in rural, regional, and remote Australia were highlighted. This was an excellent example of how our Committee's advice and expertise can create a compelling case for change.

Thank you to all Committee members for your enthusiasm and engagement as we continue our advocacy efforts.

John Simpson AM

Committee Chair for the 2023-24 period

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Brandon Ah Tong
Vickie Anderson

Leighton Boyd
Luke Chong
Annette Clarke
Anthea Cochrane
Remy Di Ponio
Anita Egan
Nabill Jacob
Chris Edwards
Bhaji Grewal

Tina Jong
Margaret Lum

Selina Madeleine
Alice Maffei
Jody Martin-Rankin
Fleur O'Hare

Shelley Pannier
Noela Prasad
Jackson
Reynolds-Ryan
Elisha Roberts
Abe Ropitini
Khalid Saifullah
Sue Silveira
Tony Starkey
Karen Titheridge
Lester Wynne-Jones
John Simpson

The Fred Hollows Foundation
Orientation and Mobility
Association of Australasia
Retina Australia
Deakin University
Guide Dogs NSW/ACT
Optometry Australia
Foresight Australia
Orthoptics Australia
Orthoptics Australia
Vision Australia
Centre for Eye Research
Australia
University of Canberra
The Royal Australian and New
Zealand College of
Ophthalmologists
Brien Holden Foundation
Guide Dogs Victoria
See Differently
Centre for Eye Research
Australia
Guide Dogs Victoria
VACCHO
Blind Citizens Australia

Guide Dogs Queensland
VACCHO
Brien Holden Foundation
NextSense
Beyond Blindness
VisAbility
Can:Do 4Kids
Blind Citizens Australia

COMMITTEE PROXIES

Jeremy Anderson
Felicity Beaulieu
Rosemary Boyd
Skye Cappuccio
Meera Chandra

Jane Cowen
Corey Crawford
Jennifer Doggett

Laura Ferreira

Pete Haydon

May Ho
Terry Ho
Chris Law
Caitlin McMorrow
Darlene McIntosh
Sharon Oberstein

Geoffrey Painter
Prakash Paudel

Guide Dogs Queensland
VisAbility
Retina Australia
Optometry Australia
Macular Disease Foundation
Australia
Orthoptics Australia
Blind Citizens Australia
The Royal Australian and New
Zealand College of
Ophthalmologists
The Royal Australian and New
Zealand College of
Ophthalmologists
Australian College of
Optometry
The Fred Hollows Foundation
University of Canberra
Deakin University
Vision Australia
Guide Dogs Victoria
UNSW School of Optometry
and Vision Science
Foresight
Brien Holden Foundation

Global Committee

The Global Committee convened three times in 2023-2024 and welcomed Deakin University as a new member. During this period the Committee shifted its advocacy focus to integrating eye health initiatives within existing regional programs.

Notable collaborative efforts included submissions to DFAT's International Gender Equality Strategy, investigating eye health within the LGBTQIA+ community, and engaging in the development of the new disability strategy of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Vision 2020 Australia also participated in the IAPB's 2030 In Sight Live event, contributing to global eye care initiatives.

I am honoured to have taken on the role of Committee Chair in March 2024 for the 2024-2025 committee cycle, following Brandon Ah Tong, whose leadership from 2020 to 2023 has been instrumental in shaping our strategic direction. In September 2023, Vision 2020 Australia submitted recommendations and insights for the new DFAT International Gender Equality Strategy.

Our submission highlighted the disproportionate burden of sight loss on women and girls, particularly in low- and middle-income settings, advocating strongly for the prioritisation of gender equality within development efforts, including the health sector.

DFAT is also in the process of developing a new disability strategy; Vision 2020 Australia and Committee Members have actively engaged in this process, participating in both in-person and virtual consultations with DFAT. The Australian Disability and Development Consortium (ADDC) and the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) led the development of a joint call for action regarding the strategy. This call urged DFAT to:

1. Set a 2030 target of 10 percent of ODA being allocated to initiatives with disability equity as a principal objective
2. Require that all in-country programs over \$3 million have a disability objective, and
3. Increase the central disability allocation to \$20 million.

Vision 2020 Australia and several members proudly supported this joint initiative.

In November, the Committee came together for a workshop aimed at assessing the advocacy efforts of Vision 2020 Australia and its Members and defining a forward-looking strategy. We collectively agreed to pursue an integrated approach to regional eye health, emphasising the importance of embedding eye health initiatives within existing programs through close collaboration with local stakeholders.

The V2020 Global Committee was represented at both the IAPB/WHO Meeting on Myopia in Singapore, January 2024 and at the IAPB/Fred Hollows Foundation Regional Summit on Eye Health and Healthy Ageing, held in Manila in April 2024.

During the 2023-2024 period, the Committee also committed to exploring specific challenges and opportunities in eye health within the LGBTQIA+ community. This initiative aligns closely with DFAT's focus on intersectionality and its commitment to formulating a comprehensive LGBTQIA+ strategy.

Vision 2020 Australia and Members from leading research institutions across the country are undertaking a rapid literature review on eye health within the LGBTQIA+ community, anticipated for completion in the latter half of 2024. Furthermore, Vision 2020 Australia led a panel discussion on eye health in the LGBTQIA+ community at the June 2024 IAPB 2030 In Sight Live event in Mexico City.

During the IAPB's 2030 In Sight Live event in Mexico City our delegation was also involved in productive discussions, contributing to global efforts to achieve accessible, available, and affordable eye care for all by 2030.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all Committee Members and their Proxies for their unwavering commitment and invaluable contributions to our shared mission. Together, we have made significant strides in advancing global eye health and advocating for inclusive policies that prioritise equity and accessibility for all.

Drew Keys

Incoming Committee Chair, 2024

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Pete Haydon	Australian College of Optometry (2023)
Tim Fricke	Australian College of Optometry (2024)
Heather Machin	Australian Ophthalmic Nurses Association National Council (2023)
Helen Freris	Blind Citizens Australia
Selina Madeleine	Brien Holden Foundation
Conor Costello	CBM Australia
Prof Mingguang He	Centre for Eye Research Australia (CERA) (2023)
Lisa Zhu	Centre for Eye Research Australia (CERA) (2024)
Prof James Armitage	Deakin University
Else Draheim	Eye Bank Australia and NZ
Remy Di Ponio	Foresight
Sue Silveira	NextSense (2024)
Wayne Hogan	OneSight (2023)
Amanda French	Orthoptics Australia (2023)
Felicia Adinato	Orthoptics Australia (2024)
Gerhard Schlenther	Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (2024)
Himal Kandel	Save Sight Institute (2023)
Judy Hatswell	Sight for All
Brandon Ah Tong	The Fred Hollows Foundation
Philippa Nicholson	Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (2023)
Vicki Evans	University of Canberra
Professor Lisa Keay	UNSW School of Optometry and Vision Science (2023)
Lily Ho	UNSW School of Optometry and Vision Science (2023)
Neilsen De Souza	University of Western Australia

COMMITTEE PROXIES

Pete Haydon	Australian College of Optometry (2024)
Deb Deshaynes	Blind Citizens Australia
Gillian Cochrane	Brien Holden Foundation
Renee Dodds	CBM Australia (2023)
A/Prof Heather Connor	Deakin University (2024)
Geoffrey Painter	Foresight

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and New Zealand
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2023 - 24 Highlights

2023 World Sight Day

This year's World Sight Day was another successful undertaking, based on media coverage, social media activity, political engagement and an increase in activity.

Our campaigning was anchored by three initiatives: an eye screening activation at Victoria Parliament House one week prior to World Sight Day and two events on World Sight Day – the launch of the NSW Parliamentary Friends Group for Eye Health and Vision Care and eye screening at Queensland Parliament House.

A suite of easily sharable creative assets enabled members to participate with minimal effort to build sector and community awareness. Media pitching resulted in interview grabs with the Vision 20/20 Australia CEO across the Nine national radio network and print and online coverage.

Both the Victorian and Queensland activations resulted in positive political engagement with both Health Ministers attending their respective events. State political connections were made with subsequent meetings scheduled across both the health and education portfolios to discuss screening frameworks for 3.5-5-year-olds.

Additionally, the launch of the NSW Parliamentary Friends Group continued to solidify political relationships, with NSW-based members engaged also. This has progressed our strategy of increasing state-based engagement, with footholds now in the three major states. 2024 will see an expansion to other states as part of our plans.



Innovation in Eye Health & Vision Care Events

It was a hugely successful day at Parliament House on November 16 with Vision 2020 Australia convening three special events across the day.

Our full day of eye checks for parliamentarians and staff was highly successful, with a record turnout of over 150 undertaking a check-up from University of Canberra optometry students.

The member symposium took a deep dive into the priority issue of children's vision and hosted the Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care Ged Kearney.

The day culminated with our Parliamentary Friends Group for Eye Health and Vision Care Cocktail Function and Innovation in Eye Health and Vision Care exhibition, showcasing companies and organisations who are leading the way to innovate in eye health technology and consumer support services. We also welcomed our special guest, Minister for the NDIS, the Hon Bill Shorten MP, who reaffirmed his commitment to consulting with the eye health and vision care sector.

We also announced on the night a new cross-discipline working group, bringing together RANZCO, Optometry Australia and Orthoptics Australia, with paediatric eye care the first area of focus for the group.

Special thanks to our event sponsors, The Fred Hollows Foundation, RANZCO and Apellis.





2024 World Sight Day Launch

Vision 20/20 Australia officially launched the 2024 World Sight Day campaign in Australia, Love Your Eyes Kids, in Sydney on May 13, 2024, with our members.

We were thrilled to have The International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) President, Caroline Casey, and co-Chair of our NSW Parliamentary Friends Group for Eye Health and Vision Care, Tim James MP, as special guests.

Special thanks to our members, The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (RANZCO), for hosting the event and The Fred Hollows Foundation for their assistance in bringing the night together.



2024 Barry Jones Vision Oration

The annual Barry Jones Vision Oration is an event to recognise an outstanding Australian who has worked tirelessly to either eliminate preventable blindness and vision loss as well as to ensure the full participation in society of people who are blind or have low vision.

We were thrilled to have Paralympian, Jess Gallagher, deliver this year's oration.

Jess was 17 when she was diagnosed with a rare, degenerative eye disease. Although her diagnosis impacted her sporting dreams as a netballer, Jess pursued her sporting ambitions to represent her country and become the first Australian athlete to medal at a summer and winter Games, and successfully represented Australia in three sports.

In 2023 RMIT University awarded Jess an Honorary Doctorate in Social Sciences, and she has been a past Board Director and advocate for Vision 2020 Australia.

Her oration delivered a personal insight of the journey of resilience and reinvention for an athlete with low vision and continued the tradition of a powerful and thought provoking address.



Mental Wellbeing Resources Guide

Vision 2020 Australia was proud to launch a new Mental Wellbeing Resources Guide which compiles services and supports that are available to people who are blind or have low vision.

This guide provides a list of resources for both crisis and voluntary support, and are categorised according to the evidence based Stepped Care Model to deliver mental health care programs.

The guide contains resources from organisations associated with eye care service delivery and low vision rehabilitation. Also included are options offered by mainstream mental health services for alternate avenues of support. The guide indicates how the resources can be accessed in different formats such as online, in person or via the telephone, as well as the suitability for the user. This directory further supports the Adult Referral Pathway for Blindness and Low Vision Services developed by Vision 2020 Australia.

The guide is hosted on the Vision 2020 Australia website and is available to view online and download, both in fully accessible formats.

We sincerely thank the members of the Vision 2020 Australia Mental Wellbeing for People with Vision Loss Working Group who have driven this initiative to fruition, as well as Guide Dogs Victoria for their valuable feedback during the user testing phase.

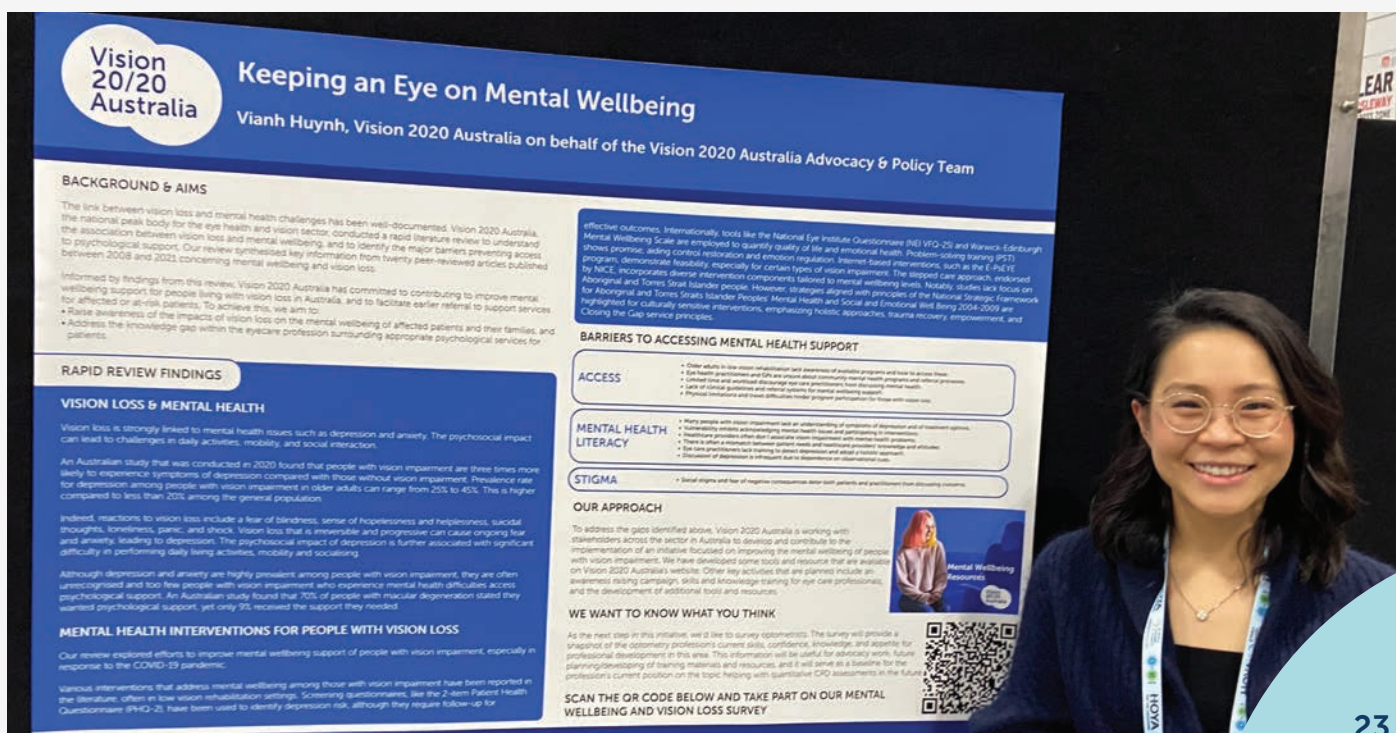
Embedding Eye Health in Primary Care Pilot

In December, 2023, Vision 2020 Australia concluded its Embedding Eye Health Preventative Care into Primary Care Pilot Project in Victoria, funded by the Victorian Government and supported by the Australian Government through the Primary Health Network (PHN) program, led by Eastern Melbourne and Murray PHN.

Over 400 GPs and primary healthcare professionals participated in webinars that covered topics such as age-related macular degeneration (AMD), cataracts and diabetes. During the pilot, Vision 2020 Australia became accredited by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) to offer continuing professional development (CPD) points for GPs participating in our education sessions.

The review of the pilot indicated that it was successful in raising awareness of eye health and building the knowledge and capacity of primary health staff to manage eye health conditions. It also indicated that the resources created during the Pilot have immense value and can be used to support QI activities for a broader range of GP practices to support scaling of eye health preventative care practice improvements.

Vision 2020 Australia is currently exploring opportunities to deliver the benefits of the package to a wider primary healthcare audience.



Parliamentary Eye Screenings & State Engagement

Now in our third year of parliamentary eye screenings, these events have been successful in progressing political engagement at the state level and building relationships with the health ministries.

Over the past year, Vision 2020 Australia, in partnership with our members have undertaken free parliamentary eye checks in Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia.

These events continue to raise awareness of the importance of eye health and vision care and the work of our members. We have enjoyed strong support from the relevant ministers and advisors in each state, including:

- Qld Minister for Health, Mental Health, Ambulance Services and Women, Shannon Fentiman
- Principal Health Policy Advisor for the Qld Premier, Greg Fowler
- SA Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Chris Picton
- Vic Minister for Mary-Anne Thomas
- WA Minister for Health and Mental Health, Amber-Jade Sanderson
- WA Minister for Regional Development, Disability Services, Seniors and Ageing and Volunteering, Don Punch.

We would like to especially thank our members for being part of our screenings this year, including Optometry Australia, See Differently, University of Western Australia, VisAbility, Guide Dogs WA and Lions Eye Institute, as well our other partners including iCare, Zeiss, Specsavers, Flinders University and QUT.



Our Members

Gold



Bronze



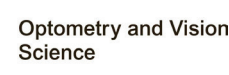
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Corresponding Member



Associate



**Vision
20/20
Australia**

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