

# Sight + Sound

THE EYE AND EAR NEWS SPRING 2024



## Hospital news and happenings

Eye and Ear redevelopment  
now complete!

## The difference you make

Medical equipment,  
research and scholarships  
funded by donations

## Patient chronicles

Meet John Fisher:  
patient, volunteer  
and donor



The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital is committed to achieving equality in health status between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Aboriginal Australians. We acknowledge that the land we meet and work upon is the traditional lands of the Kulin Nation. We value the diversity and strength of our people and communities.



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↑ The Philanthropy and Fundraising team: Carol Chevalier (Individual Giving Lead), Olivia Myeza (Director Philanthropy and Fundraising), and Mandie Kilotat (Philanthropy and Fundraising Co-ordinator). When you phone 1800 808 137 or email [fundraising@eyeandear.org.au](mailto:fundraising@eyeandear.org.au), you'll be engaging with this team. We look forward to speaking with you again soon!



↑ The Smorgon Family Wing entrance, Morrison Place.

“I would like to thank you for your generous support in the last financial year.”



# Welcome to Sight + Sound

Welcome to the Spring 2024 edition of Sight + Sound. Earlier this year, we launched our new look magazine. I want to thank you for the great feedback on this new format. We want Sight + Sound to be a way for us to connect with you, our loyal community. We want to showcase how, together, we improve the health and quality of life of the patients who pass through the doors of the Eye and Ear.

In this edition, we feature our inspiring Director of Partnerships, Clinical Education and Planning, Renee Chmielewski. We also meet John Fisher, who came to us as a patient and then went on to become a dedicated member of our volunteer community and a major donor of the Eye and Ear.

I would like to thank you for your generous support in the last financial year. You'll find a breakdown of how that generosity has helped us meet the hospital's greatest needs, invest in groundbreaking research and purchase much-needed medical equipment.

Your donations have enabled us to offer scholarships for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ophthalmology students to complete

their medical placements. These scholarships will help improve diversity and representation in the ophthalmology field nationally.

Over the last several years, our hospital has undergone a significant redevelopment. We were very pleased to welcome The Honourable Mary-Anne Thomas, the State's Minister for Health and Health Infrastructure, to our reopening in April this year. I want to thank our dedicated donors, whose commitment and support over the years has contributed to this huge milestone.

On behalf of our Board and Executive, thank you for your invaluable contributions.

Yours sincerely,

**Brendon Gardner**  
Chief Executive Officer



# Hospital news

What's been happening around our hospital



## The newly redeveloped Eye and Ear

We were proud to unveil the newly redeveloped Eye and Ear hospital in April 2024. Officiated by The Honourable Mary-Anne Thomas, Minister for Health and Health Infrastructure, the official opening on 23 April signified the beginning of a new era for our hospital.

With its bright interiors and upgraded facilities, the new Eye and Ear will elevate the experience and standard of care for patients, staff and visitors alike. We have an array of essential patient services and a dedicated floor for our clinics and specialist clinics, offering over 90 services. The 24-hour Emergency Department (ED) has a Short Stay Unit with four 24-hour beds. The new Perioperative Suite has eight state-of-the-art theatres and there is a new inpatient ward with 24 beds.

We would like to thank the generous contributions from the Australian Government, the Victorian Department of Health and our philanthropic partners. The Victorian Health Building Authority, Lyons Architects, Hansen Yuncken, Johnstaff, Watermans, Aecom and countless contractors helped turn our vision into reality.

↑ Above photo: Newly developed Eye and Ear Hospital. The Hon. Mary-Anne Thomas, Minister for Health and Health Infrastructure (right), pictured at the official opening of the hospital with Mr Brendon Gardner (CEO) and Dr Sherene Devanesen AM (Chair).

## Volunteers lending a hand in the Philanthropy and Fundraising team

The Philanthropy and Fundraising team are grateful to have two hospital volunteers lending their time. Sundus and Coral have been busy packing and sorting the Eye and Ear branded lens cloths that have been gifted to many of our donors who receive Sight + Sound in the post. They've also been making personal thank you calls to our donors. So, if you've received a thank you call lately, you may have spoken with Sundus or Coral! We are so grateful for their time and energy.

If you're interested in volunteering at the hospital, please contact our Coordinator of Community Engagement and Participation, Betty Tellis, on (03) 9929 8658 or at [betty.tellis@eyeandear.org.au](mailto:betty.tellis@eyeandear.org.au).



↑ Volunteers Sundus and Coral assisting the Philanthropy and Fundraising team.

## Support us while you shop! Nominate the Eye and Ear as your selected charity

Did you know that when you shop at any Ritchies IGA store across Victoria, New South Wales or Queensland, you can raise money for the Eye and Ear at the same time? All you need to do is nominate the Eye and Ear as your selected charity. So, the next time you use your Ritchies IGA Card, we will receive 0.5 per cent of whatever you spend in store – at no extra cost to you.

You can download the Ritchies Card App from the Apple Store or Google Play, or you can pick up a physical card from your local IGA. Happy shopping and thank you in advance for the difference your donations will make for the hospital.



## Eye cancer research enabled by philanthropy

The hospital has secured some funding to further research into ocular oncology (eye cancer). The funding means the ocular oncology team, led by Head of Oncology Dr John McKenzie, can work towards establishing national benchmarking data for the treatment of eye cancer and contribute to better treatment, care and survival rates for patients. We are grateful to Isobel Hill Brown Charitable Trust, Ethel Herman Charitable Trust, The Alma Hazel Eddy Trust and William G. Maxwell Trust for their generous contributions towards this project.

↑ The Ocular Oncology team.



## Winter Research Forum

Donors and staff came together for our Winter Research Forum on 31 July, where they heard about the hospital's groundbreaking research to prevent vision and hearing loss.

Two esteemed Eye and Ear staff presented on their latest research in their specialist fields:

- Associate Professor David Szmulewicz, Head of Balance Disorders and Ataxia Service, presented on new genes, diseases and treatments for complex balance disorders and
- Professor Stephen O'Leary, Consultant Otolaryngologist at the Eye and Ear and William Gibson Chair in Otolaryngology at the University of Melbourne, presented on the world's first drug-eluting cochlear implant pivotal trial.

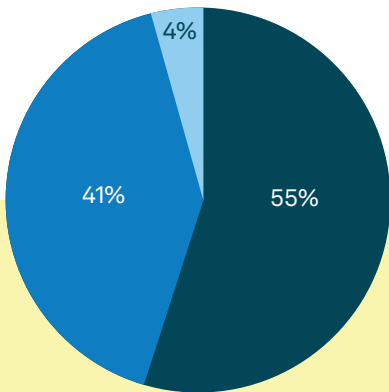
If you'd like to receive invitations to future hospital events, including our Annual General Meeting in November, please get in touch with us at 1800 808 137 or via email to [fundraising@eyeandear.org.au](mailto:fundraising@eyeandear.org.au).



↑ Donors who attended the Winter Research Forum and our guest speakers Associate Professor David Szmulewicz and Professor Stephen O'Leary with our executive staff.

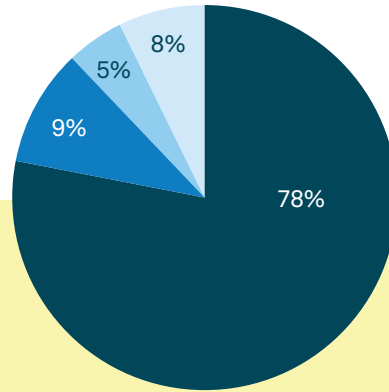
# The difference you make

You gave, we delivered. Here's a snapshot of what donated funds have been used for lately and how your support is making a real difference. We are so grateful!



### Donation allocations (FY24)

- The hospital's greatest needs
- Research
- Medical equipment



### Income type (FY24)

- Bequest revenue
- Donation revenue
- Estate revenue
- Trust and Foundation revenue

## Our impact in numbers 2023-2024

Thanks to our donors, last financial year the Eye and Ear received a total of \$3,289,581 in donated funds. Of this, 55 per cent was earmarked for the hospital's greatest needs (including the day-to-day running of the hospital); 41 per cent for research; and four per cent for medical equipment. Most of the hospital's philanthropic income came from bequests, followed by donations, trusts and foundations and estates (perpetual Gifts in Wills). We are deeply thankful for the generous support of our donors and the difference these funds make to the patient care we're able to provide.

# Thank





“The generosity of our donors is highly valued and appreciated by staff at the Eye and Ear. By supporting the Eye and Ear you’re helping Australia’s only specialist eye, ear, nose and throat hospital with new equipment, training, research and innovation”.

**Leanne Turner,**  
Executive Director Operations and Chief Nursing Officer



### Monitoring glaucoma at home to preserve sight

A grant from auDA Foundation funded research to help people living with glaucoma, the leading cause of irreversible blindness. Glaucoma patients must visit a clinic for vision testing regularly, which is challenging and costly for those living regionally. Dr George Kong led a study involving 277 regional glaucoma patients. Patients performed vision testing at home by following simple voice guidance on their device. The results of the at-home vision tests compared well with the clinic vision tests.



### Infrared video goggles to help patients with dizziness, vertigo or balance problems

Thanks to a generous donation from the Temporal Bone Donor Society Inc, our Emergency Department now has specialised goggles designed to help doctors assess and manage patients with dizziness, vertigo and balance problems.

They record patient eye movements during clinical vestibular tests. The vestibular system helps your brain understand your movement, position and where you are in space. Doctors can use the goggles to assess conditions like Meniere’s Disease, vestibular migraine and motion sensitivity.



### Scholarships for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to complete their medical placements in ophthalmology

There is currently only one Aboriginal ophthalmologist (specialist eye doctor) in Australia. Thanks to your donations, we are making available four scholarships for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical students to complete ophthalmology placements. The scholarships will reduce the financial barriers of the medical placements, including the placement fee and travel and accommodation costs required for regional or interstate students. This initiative aims to improve Indigenous representation in the ophthalmology field nationally.

# You

# Our people

The heart of the Eye and Ear



↑ Renee Chmielewski – Director of Partnerships, Clinical Education and Planning.

In celebration of International Women's Day, we highlight the amazing work done by our Director of Partnerships, Clinical Education and Planning, Renee Chmielewski.

Renee has worked in healthcare for over 35 years and started at the Eye and Ear in 2017. Beginning her career in health as a nurse, Renee was given the opportunity to further her skills and apply her experiences in a different way to better patient outcomes.

Currently, Renee manages the Nursing Education, Aboriginal Health, Volunteer and Consumer Engagement, and Clinical Education teams as well as leading the Strategic and Business Planning and Enterprise Risk portfolios.

## Q+A

This year, Renee was selected as the hospital's hero for International Women's Day. We sat down with her for a Q+A to find out more about her incredible career.

**Q: What motivated you to move into clinical education and training?**

**A:** I was working as a nurse and I really enjoyed teaching the new and junior nursing staff and the nursing students. When the time came for me to grow in my career, moving into a Clinical Nurse Educator position was a natural choice and I was very happy working in Nursing Education for more than 10 years. After then moving on to working in other specialties, I'm really pleased to be working back in that space where I'm now managing the Nursing Education Team.

**Q: How do you think diversity in healthcare can improve patient outcomes?**

**A:** Diversity of thinking and ensuring the delivery of equitable and inclusive care is provided is what is required to ensure all patients, irrespective of their background and condition, are provided with the care they need to support them to live the best lives they can.

**Q: What is the most exciting part of your job?**

**A:** Getting to work with so many wonderful staff and volunteers and together making positive changes to improve patient experiences.

**Q: What motivates you at work?**

**A:** Working with others to ensure we have the systems and processes in place to deliver good patient and carer experiences.

**Q: Describe your perfect day.**

**A:** On holidays with my family, experiencing and seeing something new and amazing.



# Patient chronicles

John Fisher is a valued major donor and a volunteer at the Eye and Ear. After a car accident in 1970 impacted his hearing, John became socially isolated as his hearing worsened. It wasn't until a referral for a cochlear implant that his life began to turn around. We spoke with John to hear more of his inspiring story.



↑ John Fisher: patient, donor and volunteer.

**Q: What was your introduction to the Eye and Ear?**

A: As a result of a car accident, I developed otosclerosis leading to a stapedectomy in 1970. In 2012 the prosthesis failed rendering me quite deaf in the right ear. Combined with age-related hearing loss in my left ear, my overall loss of hearing caused problems. In about May 2016 my GP referred me to the Cochlear Implant Clinic at the Eye and Ear. I underwent an operation for the implant and six weeks later the implant was turned on. I heard speech almost immediately and after a few weeks the implant had just become a normal part of what was a whole new life.

**Q: Can you tell us a little bit about your experience at the hospital?**

A: When I first came to the hospital, I found it a very easy place to deal with. It's not too big and impersonal which is reassuring. The staff were very supportive and not only answered my questions but often anticipated them. This was very important as I was initially quite apprehensive about the whole procedure and the staff's support was paramount.

**Q: How did your cochlear implant affect your life?**

A: Prior to the implant I had become quite socially isolated and found work almost impossible. I had ceased to accompany my wife to many social occasions and was having

difficulty communicating with our children. With the implant, I picked up virtually all my old activities and could participate in family life. Before the implant my life was diminishing at an accelerating rate; now my hearing is almost as good as my peers and I easily interact with friends and family.

**Q: Can you share what prompted you to become a donor to our hospital?**

A: Donating to the hospital is one way of thanking the hospital and staff for the improvement to my life that the cochlear implant has made.

**Q: What is your favourite hobby?**

A: I really enjoy swimming and snorkelling and have swum nearly every morning for the past near 30 years.

**Q: Describe your perfect day.**

A: Any sunny day spent with friends has a great chance of being perfect.

**Q: What message do you have for people who are considering volunteering their time or donating money to our hospital?**

A: Sensory losses rob people of the opportunity to fully participate in the life of our wonderful community. Helping the Eye and Ear, through donating or volunteering, is a practical way to help people with problems that severely restrict their full enjoyment of life.

# Supporters in the spotlight

The people and partners contributing to our hospital



↑ Gandel Foundation representatives and Eye and Ear leadership during the Foundation's visit to the hospital. Left to right: Head of Balance Disorders Associate Professor David Szmulewicz; Gandel Foundation CEO Vedran Drakulic OAM; Gandel Foundation Deputy Chair Graham Goldsmith AO; Executive Director Operations Leanne Turner; Director Ambulatory Services Tracy Siggins and CEO Brendon Gardner .

## Gandel Foundation continues to restore balance

Representatives from Gandel Foundation toured the hospital in March. Graham Goldsmith AO, Deputy Chair, and Vedran Drakulic OAM, CEO and Company Secretary, spent time in the new home of the Epley Omniax System (EOS) which Gandel Foundation funded in 2013 and is used in the diagnosis and management of balance disorders.

They were hosted by Associate Professor David Szmulewicz, Head of Balance Disorders and Ataxia Services. David shared some encouraging stories of patients who have made a positive recovery from debilitating balance disorders thanks to Gandel Foundation's support.



↑ Gandel Foundation signage outside the room that houses the EOS, used to treat balance disorders.

## Smorgon family legacy continues

Mr Graham Smorgon AM visited the Eye and Ear in March for a tour of the redeveloped hospital. The Smorgon family made a significant donation to the hospital in 1980 for the fit-out of the third to sixth floors of what has since been known as The Smorgon Family Wing. This transformational gift continues to benefit every patient, carer and staff member who walks through the doors of the hospital today.



↑ Mr Graham Smorgon AM and Mr Brendon Gardner CEO.





## Include a Charity week

2-9 September was Include a Charity Week, a social change campaign of Fundraising Institute Australia aimed at encouraging more people to leave a gift in their Will to causes they are passionate about. The Eye and Ear has benefitted significantly from bequests over our 160+ year history, with bequests making up 65 per cent of the hospital's philanthropic income over the past five years.

Bequests have supported the purchase of critical medical equipment, the redevelopment of the hospital, and investment into ground-breaking research and quality care for our patients. We are so thankful for every person who has thought of the hospital in their Will and made an impact through their legacy giving.

If you've included a gift to the Eye and Ear in your Will, or if you'd like to in the future, our Philanthropy and Fundraising team would love to connect with you. Reach out at 1800 808 137 or via email to [fundraising@eyeandear.org.au](mailto:fundraising@eyeandear.org.au).

# In your words

Here's what some of our donors told us recently about why they support the hospital:

**"I donate to the Eye and Ear to ensure they can continue helping those who are losing their vision and conducting research to prevent vision loss. The eyes don't get as much attention as some other causes or ailments and yet they are so important to our human experience. If even one person can have their vision saved, I count that as a win."**

Bill

**"As small as it may be, I feel all the better for it as I know of your dedication to help everyone who walks through your doors."**

Sebastian

**"I am a very grateful patient after receiving emergency eye care and treatment."**

Carole

**"I was an outpatient with you at the sweet age of three. I'm now 50!"**

Christopher

# YES, I would like to give the gift of Sight + Sound by donating today.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Donor ID (If known): \_\_\_\_\_

Please tell us what motivated you to give  
or email us at [fundraising@eyear.dear.org.au](mailto:fundraising@eyear.dear.org.au)

Please accept my once-off donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

OR, I wish to make a monthly gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

via: (please tick)  MasterCard  Money order

VISA  Cheque

Card no: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Cardholder's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Please email my receipt

# Other ways to donate:



Please tear off and return in the reply paid envelope.



<https://donate.eyear.dear.org.au/> or scan the QR code.



Call us on 1800 808 137 to make a payment over the phone.



Donate via the cashier in the main hospital foyer.



Please send me information about including a gift to the Eye and Ear in my Will.



I have already included a gift to the Eye and Ear in my Will.

All donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible.




I do not wish to receive further communication from The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital.







 Give  
the gift  
of Sight +  
Sound




## The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital


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