

Sight + Sound

THE EYE AND EAR NEWS AUTUMN 2026



Hospital news

Celebrating excellence and advancing care with new tools and initiatives

Our people

Inside Dr Chris Brown's world of surgery, gardening and patient care

Patient chronicles

Adele and Jordan's journey transformed through treatment and support

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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↑ Jordan, aged 2, prior to her first of many surgeries.



↑ Brodie Seymour, the first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student to receive an Ophthalmology placement scholarship.



Welcome to Sight + Sound

Welcome to the first edition of Sight + Sound for 2026. We begin this year on a strong foundation, built on the achievements and new partnerships celebrated throughout 2025.

Among the highlights were several significant milestones in our Cochlear Implant Clinic, including 40 years since the world's first public Cochlear Implant Clinic opened at the hospital and the 5,000th patient receiving a cochlear implant. Across The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital (Eye and Ear), more than 220,000 patients came through our doors last year.

These numbers are remarkable and reflect the dedication and commitment of our staff and volunteers, who are making a real difference in the lives of hundreds of thousands of people.

Behind every one of these numbers is a person, a family and a story that is personal, remarkable and inspiring. In this edition, we share some of these stories with you.

In December, we shared the story of Adele and her daughter Jordan, and the generous response from you - our community - surpassed all expectations.

In this issue, you can read their story again and discover how much was raised to support more families like Adele and Jordan (page 7).

We also meet Brigid, a long-term patient of the Eye and Ear. Brigid's moving reflections on her decision to leave a gift in her Will are a powerful reminder of the lasting impact of our work, and of the generosity of those who support us.

Even if you never meet the people behind these stories, your support still makes a real difference. Whether you donate, volunteer or support us through everyday shopping (see page 3), you are helping to improve lives in very real and lasting ways.

The milestones and achievements of 2025 have positioned us well for a successful and impactful 2026 and I look forward to sharing more of that journey with you throughout the year.

Yours sincerely,

Brendon Gardner
Chief Executive Officer

Hospital news



Annual General Meeting and Excellence Awards

On 11 December 2025, the Eye and Ear community gathered for a day that celebrated achievement, innovation and impact, at the 2024-2025 Annual General Meeting and the Eye and Ear Excellence Awards. The occasion showcased the dedication of our staff and the vital role our supporters play in advancing patient care.

Major donors, bequestors and Friends of the Eye and Ear were welcomed to a special morning tea, providing a meaningful opportunity to connect and share in the hospital's vision for the future. Guests enjoyed an insightful keynote presentation from Dr Thomas Hardy and Dr Jwu Jin Khong, who presented *Oculoplastics at the Eye and Ear: Looking Back and Looking Forward*. Their reflections highlighted how decades of progress have transformed care and outlined the exciting possibilities ahead.

The day concluded with the Excellence Awards, which recognised Eye and Ear staff whose compassion, leadership and commitment exemplify excellence in patient care. These achievements are made possible through the generosity of our donors, whose support helps shape better outcomes for patients.

↑ Front row: The Philanthropy and Fundraising team – Belinda Barker, Mandie Kilotat, Olivia Myeza and Nusrat Tanjee. Behind them: donors and bequestors of the hospital.

2025 recipient of the Noel and Imelda Foster Award

Dr Stephenie Tiew, Chief Eye Registrar, was honoured with the Noel and Imelda Foster Award for 2025, in recognition of her outstanding leadership and contribution to the Eye and Ear. Established through a generous 2013 bequest from Noel and Imelda Foster, the Award continues to support excellence in patient care.

The Fosters intended the Award to be presented annually, in perpetuity, to a Registrar or Fellow who demonstrates exceptional leadership and commitment. It includes a cash prize and an engraved medallion, with recipients' names recorded on a framed scroll displayed on Level 5 of the hospital.

We are deeply grateful for the lasting legacy created through the Fosters' Gift in Will.

“Stephenie’s support for junior doctors, commitment to continuous improvement, and efforts in fostering a positive workplace culture make her a deserving recipient of this prestigious award,” said Dr Nathan Vos, Director, Medical Services.



↑ Dr Elsie Chan (left) presenting the award to Dr Stephenie Tiew.

Supporting the Eye and Ear

There are many meaningful ways to support the Eye and Ear. Every contribution helps advance innovation, care and better outcomes for our patients.

Donate

Your tax-deductible gift helps deliver vital care, treatment and research to prevent vision and hearing loss. Since 1863, we've been at the forefront of specialist eye, ear, nose and throat care. Your support helps us expand our impact into the future.



Container Deposit Scheme

In partnership with Envirobank, we're taking another positive step towards a greener future with the installation of a container deposit scheme across the hospital. Envirobank is proudly Indigenous-owned and driven by a strong commitment to caring for Country, encouraging everyone to play a part in protecting our environment.

We're currently trialling the new black container deposit bins in the Emergency Department. All funds raised through this initiative will be reinvested directly into the hospital, supporting our sustainability efforts.

Enjoy big savings while supporting the hospital

The Entertainment Book is now digital and better than ever. When you purchase an Entertainment Membership, 20% goes directly to the Eye and Ear. Enjoy savings of up to 50% on dining, shopping and experiences across Australia and New Zealand. Purchase your Entertainment Membership and support the Eye and Ear here: <https://eyeandear.org.au/support-the-eye-and-ear/entertainment-membership/>

Turn your shopping into support for the Eye and Ear

Did you know your weekly groceries can help support the hospital? By joining the Ritchies Community Benefit Program and nominating the Eye and Ear as your chosen charity, every shop at your local Ritchies IGA contributes—at no extra cost to you.

- Download the Ritchies Card App or pick up a card in store
- Select The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital as your charity
- Shop and scan – 0.5% of your spend is donated directly to us!



Volunteer

For over 100 years, volunteers have been at the heart of our hospital, offering time, skills and care to support patients. From the first Auxiliary group in 1922 to today's Concierge program and patient support roles, volunteers make a real difference every day. Learn more at <https://eyeandear.org.au/support-the-eye-and-ear/volunteer/>



The difference you make

Every donation plays a vital role in advancing the Eye and Ear's work, helping transform care today while shaping the breakthroughs of tomorrow. Here are some recent examples of how we've used donated funds around the hospital.



Ear, nose and throat surgical tools

Thanks to generous donations from the Isobel Hill Brown Charitable Trust, the Ethel Herman Charitable Trust and The Diana Browne Trust, the Eye and Ear has been able to purchase three Microdebriders and three Oto Tool Drills - vital instruments for ENT surgery. Microdebriders play a key role in procedures such as sinus surgery, turbinoplasty and adenoidectomy, helping patients breathe more easily and reducing chronic infections, particularly in children.

Oto Tool Drills are essential for delicate stapes surgery, which treats otosclerosis - a progressive condition that causes hearing loss. These tools enable our surgeons to restore hearing and improve quality of life for patients who might otherwise face permanent impairment.



Advancing treatment for eye cancer

Generous funding from the Isobel Hill Brown Charitable Trust, the Ethel Herman Charitable Trust, The Alma Hazel Eddy Trust and the William G. Maxwell Trust has enabled the Eye and Ear to set a national benchmark for treating ocular melanoma - a rare but aggressive eye cancer. The donated funds enabled the employment of a part-time Senior Clinical Research Coordinator, Darvy Dang (pictured), to capture treatment and outcome data for patients participating in clinical trials for ocular melanoma treatment.

This work contributes to establishing Australian and international benchmarks for ophthalmic outcomes, which will help guide future therapies aimed at improving vision preservation and, over time, survivorship.

We are so

“These scholarships offer Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical students a valuable opportunity to experience ophthalmology while still studying, encouraging more future specialists and strengthening care for our communities.”

Associate Professor, Rosie Dawkins



Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical students to complete ophthalmology placements

Thanks to your support, Brodie Seymour (pictured) was the first student to receive our elective scholarship for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical students. Brodie completed a six-week ophthalmology placement at the Eye and Ear in September–October 2025. Your donations are helping shape his path to becoming an ophthalmologist and improving eye health in First Nations communities.

Watch his story to see the impact of your generosity. <https://eyeandear.org.au/medical-student-education/>.



Ultrasound system for operating theatres

Thanks to the Eirene Lucas Foundation, this new specialised imaging device will make eye surgeries safer and more precise, especially in urgent or complex cases like retinal detachment, eye tumours, bleeding, or dense cataracts when the back of the eye is difficult to see. This advanced ultrasound gives surgeons a clear, real-time view of the back of the eye, helping avoid complications and often allowing multiple procedures to be safely combined in a single surgery. It also enhances cancer care by monitoring eye tumours before and during surgeries.

grateful!

Our people

The heart of the Eye and Ear: Meet ENT surgeon Dr Chris Brown



Dr Chris Brown is an ear, nose and throat surgeon, with a special interest in nasal and sinus conditions. He describes working on the small nooks and crannies of a nose as “like caving; it’s as if you enter another world.” He’s also an enthusiastic gardener who had a hand in the beautiful gardens around our hospital.

Q: What does a typical day look like for you?

A: A typical day consists of waking up early and sniffing the roses. It ensures you are still alive and makes you appreciate the small things in life. If the kids are still asleep, I slip out the door. I grab a coffee and ready myself to see a vast array of noses, or patients with noses.

No nose is the same. Some patients love to see what is going on, others ask me how I could do what I do. I ponder that question unsure how to answer. I smile and give them a jellybean. If I am not seeing patients, then it’s time to put on some theatre scrubs. It’s a privilege and honour to perform surgery. I never take it for granted.

Q: How did you get involved in working on the gardens around our hospital?

A: During Covid I had some spare time. I noticed the weeds outside the hospital on Victoria Parade were knee high. I decided to pull some out and realised how much fun it was. Rob suggested putting some plants in. I got hospital approval and then started digging trenches and meeting people.

Bob helped offload the soil that was trailered in. Penny would offer encouragement. Brendon would stop and discuss his home projects on his way to meetings. Colleen wondered why it was raining when the skies were blue. Sandra waved the hose with glee. Patients asked for directions. Peter offered me a coffee and wondered what I was doing. I wondered what I was doing.

Q: Do you find any similarities between surgery and gardening?

A: When you are gardening, you are present and all other worries shrink away. Surgery is a bit like that. You need to be calm, you need to be focused, you need to block out background noise.

Q: If you could invite three people (living or historical) to lunch in the gardens around the hospital, who would they be and why?

A: I would invite my dad’s dad. I never got the chance to meet him. I would invite Kelly Slater, probably the greatest surfer of all time. I would also invite the current Dalai Lama. He always seems so happy.

Q: What’s the best piece of advice you’ve received?

A: Son, never get old.

Patient chronicles

In December 2025, we shared the remarkable story of Adele and her daughter Jordan, who has been cared for at the Eye and Ear since she was just six months old.

Jordan was diagnosed with a rare condition called congenital fibrosis of the extraocular muscles (CFEOM), which made it difficult for her to open her eyes and see like other children. Thanks to the expertise and compassion of the Eye and Ear team, Jordan has undergone nine surgeries over the past decade. Each procedure has helped her vision improve, her independence grow, and her confidence strengthen—so much so that she now dreams of becoming an optometrist or orthoptist herself.

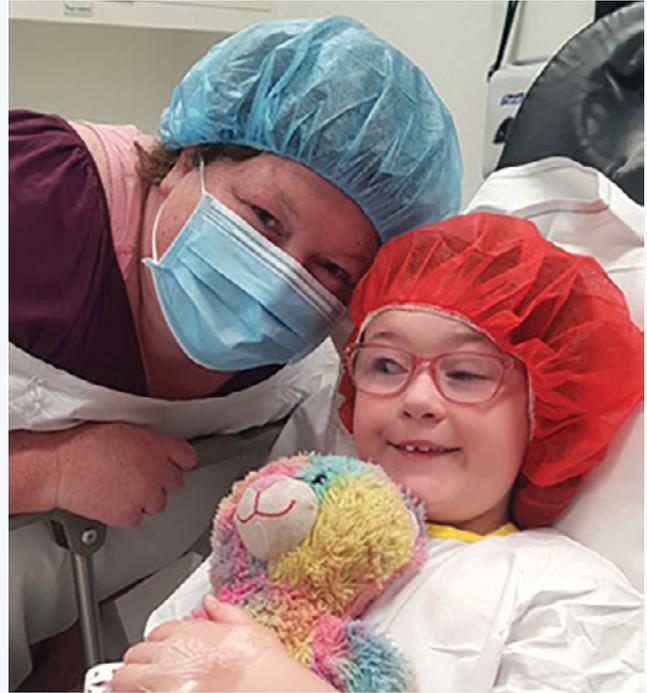
Adele reflected on the early days of worry, long waits for surgery and the emotional strain of not knowing what the future would hold.

“We had to wait two years - two long years - before she was old enough to undergo surgery. But in that time, the Eye and Ear didn’t just wait with us. They consulted international experts to ensure Jordan’s care was guided by the most up-to-date global evidence.

When I look back at that time, I remember all the challenges Jordan faced. Because she couldn’t open her eyelids the way most of us do, she had to tilt her head far back just to see. She had to wear glasses every waking minute - even while showering, as she couldn’t see anything without them. She struggled with depth perception.

While most children could run and play freely, we had to be helicopter parents. So often her friends would be trying something new like climbing a tree or going swimming in the ocean. Jordan couldn’t do everything the other kids could do and we had to be really protective over her.”

The Eye and Ear’s Ocular Motility Clinic, led by Dr Shivanand Sheth, is Australia’s only specialist service for eye alignment and movement disorders. The clinic treats thousands of patients



each year, and early intervention is essential, particularly for children, to achieve the best outcomes.

Dr Sheth explains how Jordan’s case is a perfect example of why collaboration matters. “The Oculoplastic unit handled Jordan’s complex eyelid surgery, and the Ocular Motility Clinic focused on her eye alignment and visual development. Together, we built a plan that addressed both function and appearance, ensuring the best possible visual and psychosocial outcome.”

Jordan’s care was tailored to her age, using toys, games, videos and child-friendly language to make her experience comfortable. Adele was included in every step, from diagnosis to home therapy. After every surgery, Jordan received a bravery award from the post-operative care team, helping her feel supported and proud.

Adele’s message to supporters is clear: donations make this life-changing care possible. And thanks to the generosity of supporters, over \$47,000 was raised to help children like Jordan access specialist care.

“I know my family has benefited from your generosity and I wanted to share Jordan’s story with you. We may never meet, but you have changed my daughter’s life for the better. Small things, like Jordan now riding her bike to and from school, giving her independence we didn’t know she would have, mean the world to us. This is the difference your generosity makes.”

Supporters in the spotlight

The people and partners contributing to our hospital

Leaving a legacy at the Eye and Ear

Brigid is a long-term patient of the hospital, living with uveitis - a painful, sporadic eye condition that can cause severe light sensitivity and requires urgent treatment. She has chosen to include a Gift in her Will to support the hospital's future. We sat down with Brigid to learn more about her journey and what inspired her decision.

Q: Do you remember your first visit to the hospital?

A: It was to the Emergency Department (ED) with uveitis in one of my eyes. Uveitis varies in pain levels and the negative impact of light on your eyes, depending on how far advanced it is.

Q: Is there a moment of care that has stayed with you?

A: One night in the ED during the COVID years, the sole doctor on duty was literally run off his feet. After each patient, he'd come out through the doors to the patient waiting area, sanitise his hands and call the next patient's name, as fast as he could. I was one of the last patients to be seen in the early hours of the morning, and after treatment, I waited for a taxi to arrive. He stuck his head out the

doors and asked if a nurse had called a taxi for me. That was so thoughtful.

Q: What inspired you to include a Gift in your Will to the Eye and Ear?

A: In discussion with my lawyer when getting a will drawn up, I decided to leave a gift to the hospital, as I knew the money would go directly to the hospital and be put to good use. The hospital has made an impression on me as a patient and I wanted to give something back. 'What goes around, comes around' as the saying goes.

Q: What does "leaving a legacy" mean to you personally?

A: I hope that my gift helps uveitis research at the hospital, and in turn, patients with this common acute eye condition.

Q: Do you have a message for the doctors and nurses who have cared for you over the years?

A: You are phenomenal. The clinical care, humanity and grit that you display day in and day out is sincerely appreciated. I know how hard you work and see the high number of patients that you treat.



Leave a legacy with a Gift in Will

The Eye and Ear has benefitted significantly from bequests over our 160+ year history. Generous legacy gifts help us to purchase critical medical equipment, redevelop the hospital, invest in ground-breaking research and provide quality care and treatment for our patients.

To find out more about how to include a Gift in your Will visit <https://eyeandear.org.au/support-the-eye-and-ear/include-a-gift-to-the-eye-and-ear-in-your-will/> or call 1800 808 137.

In your words

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



"All staff were so attentive and extremely helpful. I thank all so much"

Ian

"Excellent hospital support, felt like she was treated like a person not an obligation, nurses were lovely"

Lesley

"Thank you so much to the Anaesthetist, Doctor, Nurses and all the amazing staff. Such warmth and kindness, such a sweet gesture of making tea for my mum. Grateful"

Semaet

"Thank you to each and every single staff member that cared for our son during surgery and recovery. Each of you have made all the difference for him"

Ari

"The doctors, nurses and staff have been absolutely amazing. The after care has been exceptional"

Dencil

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@eyeandear.org.au

Please accept my once-off donation of \$ _____

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

via: (please tick) MasterCard

VISA Cheque

Card no: _____

Expiry date: ____ / ____

Cardholder's name: _____

Signature: _____

Please email my receipt

Ways to donate:



Please tear off this coupon and return in the reply paid envelope.



<https://donate.eyeandear.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.



A close-up, vertical photograph of a person's face, focusing on the eye and forehead. The person has light brown hair and a hand is visible near their eye, possibly resting their chin on it. The lighting is soft and warm, highlighting the texture of the skin and the intensity of the gaze. The background is dark and out of focus.

Give
the gift
of Sight +
Sound



The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital

Phone: 1800 808 137

Email: fundraising@eyeandear.org.au

32 Gisborne Street, East Melbourne
Victoria 3002

www.eyeandear.org.au

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You can view our Philanthropy and Fundraising Privacy Statement online:
<https://eyeandear.org.au/philanthropy-and-fundraising-privacy-statement>.

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