

Training centre opens at college

A \$750,000 training facility for Deakin University optometry students has been formally opened at the Australian College of Optometry.

The newly-built centre is housed at the college in Carlton, Victoria.

Foundation director of optometry at Deakin University's Faculty of Health in Geelong, Professor Harrison Weisinger, who opened the centre on 31 October, said it was the most advanced of its type in Australia or New Zealand.

He said Specsavers paid for the design and building of the centre in a major sponsorship undertaking but it was ultimately Deakin's design, based on a teaching clinic at Canada's University of Waterloo.

'This is a massive step forward for optometry in Australia,' Professor Weisinger said. 'Deakin students will have clinical placements, like an apprenticeship, in private practice for the last six months of their course.'

'To send them into optometry practices, they must have a basic level of competence and this facility guarantees that competence,' he said.

'We have our state-of-the-art facility at Geelong and the ACO facility is the next level of advancement and is part of the overall infrastructure needed to deliver up to 100 Deakin graduates each year.'

'I cannot overstate the im-

portance of this agreement with the ACO,' he said.

Professor Weisinger said the centre had been in use since April with from 16 to 20 second-year students a week receiving practical instruction and teaching.

Each student attends the facility for 10 weeks during their second and third years.

They are instructed in the upstairs training centre before observing patients, dispensing and seeing patients at college clinics under supervision. Each student will see about 30 patients over two years.

Deakin staff including Dr Heather Wilson, Dr Geoff Sampson, Associate Professor Craig Woods and Dr Sharon Bentley instruct students at the centre along with college optometrists.

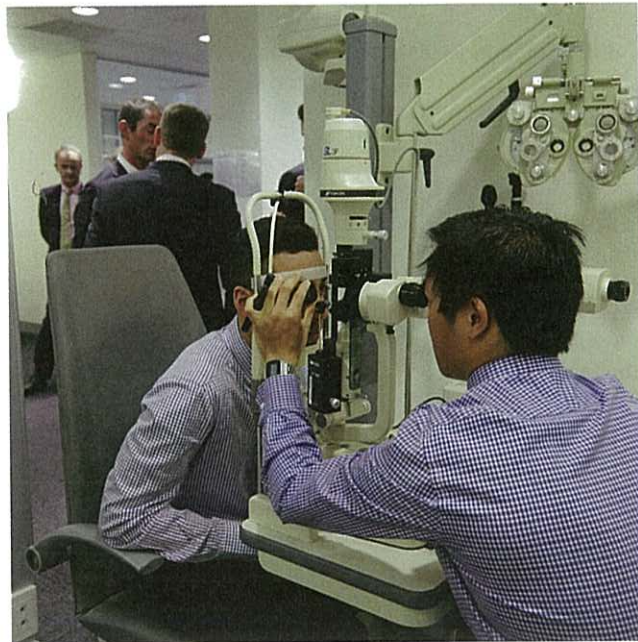
The centre, in a former optics laboratory and science teaching space, features an open plan demonstration area.

'The patient sits in a chair and the demonstrator can show a class what is happening via video, slitlamp and monitor,' Professor Weisinger said.

'The patient has their back to the centre of the room so the supervisor can stand in the middle of the room and see the faces of the students and what they are doing.'

The rest of the area is partitioned into 10 optometry consulting lanes with various equipment.

The \$750,000 investment covered the fit-out, equip-



Deakin University's new optometry training centre at the Australian College of Optometry

ment and information technology.

Professor Weisinger said Deakin contributed about \$250,000, and OPSM paid to equip five consulting lanes. Specsavers contributed more than \$300,000 for the design and building including stripping the premises, architecture, legal fees, fit-out and equipping five consulting lanes and the main demonstration area.

He said Deakin staff and the Specsavers business development team provided input on the design to independent architects.

He thanked Specsavers, OPSM and the college, and

said the project would not have been possible without Specsavers and OPSM funding.

Specsavers commercial director Paul Bott said investing in the facility to support Deakin's vision demonstrated that Specsavers supported a growing optometric workforce.

'We particularly support Deakin's regional focus,' he said.

Director of community at OPSM Robyn Weinberg said: 'We have been thrilled to work with Deakin in this initiative which exposes Deakin's optometry students to the expertise and resource of the ACO.'