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Optometrists understand language barrier

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Non-English speaking Victorians have greater issues around accessing services due to language and cultural barriers, which may explain why one in four Victorian adults who speak a language other than English at home have never had an eye test.

Optometrists from around the state understand just how much of a barrier language can be for their patients, and are praising a new suite of multilingual eye health promotional materials, which are designed to tackle the language barrier and demystify eye health for those who do not speak English.



Photo: Image extracted from the Greek video. The patient is wearing a trial frame and looking ahead, while the the optometrist is changing the left lense of the trial frame.

Greek speaking optometrist from the [Australian College of Optometry](#), Angeliki Arvanitis, said being able to speak Greek and having information about eye health and vision care available in other languages was important for many of her patients.

“Being able to communicate with them in their native language puts them at ease so they are more comfortable asking questions about their eyes, which in turn means they can better manage their eye health,” Ms Arvanitis said.

“Over the years, this has enabled me to help many patients and diagnose many eye conditions which could have led to vision loss if left untreated.

“Unfortunately, I can only help those who are already accessing eye care services. There are still many people who speak a language other than English who have never had an eye examination, let alone regular ones simply because they are not aware of how important this is.”

The materials are available in Arabic, Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin), Greek, Italian and Vietnamese and include information sheets and multi-media clips that explain the role of optometrists and ophthalmologists, brochures and posters highlighting the importance of eye tests and good eye health care.

The resources are available for download from the [Vision Initiative health professionals pages](#) on this website.

- Common eye conditions
- [Eye health in Australia](#)
- [How your eyes work](#)
- [Age-related macular degeneration](#)
- [Cataracts](#)
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