

New glaucoma clinic to mark Victorian Eyecare Service's 30th



TO mark the 30th anniversary of the Victorian Eyecare Service, a new glaucoma clinic will be established as a partnership between the Australian College of Optometry and The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital.

The clinic, for the management of patients with suspected or early glaucoma, aims to address the existing and growing demand for glaucoma services and enable safe, correct and timely management from eye-care practitioners.

Since the introduction of the VES in 1985, over two million Victorians experiencing disadvantage have benefited from eye-care consultations and services aimed at correcting refractive error and preventing eye disease.

The new glaucoma clinic will be located at the Australian College of Optometry's main clinic in Carlton. Staffed by ophthalmologists, optometrists and orthoptists working as a team to target patients with suspected or early glaucoma. It is planned to commence in February 2016.

Glaucoma is the leading cause of preventable and irreversible blindness worldwide. It is estimated that 3.7 per cent of the Australian population have glaucoma or are strong suspects for the disease. In Victoria it is estimated to affect over 200,000 people.

At a special event to celebrate the 30th anniversary and launch the new clinic, Victoria's health minister Ms Jill Hennessy said: "As our population ages, the prevalence of glaucoma will continue to rise, placing added demand



on Victoria's eye-care services and the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital.

"We're responding to this challenge by funding a more effective and efficient model of care that will ensure low risk glaucoma patients receive earlier care and treatment."

"Congratulations to the Victorian Eyecare Service on 30 years of providing eye care and glasses for the Victorians who need it the most."

Mr Mark Petty, chief executive officer of The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital, said: "Our experienced team of ophthalmologists are working closely with optometrists at the Australian College of Optometry to design a more effective and efficient model of care to address the growing demand for glaucoma services. This will provide benefits both for patients accessing the new clinic and will also improve hospital access for patients with more severe disease."



Top (L-R): Kathleen Philip, chief medical officer, Department of Health and Human Services; Catherine Green, head of Glaucoma Unit, The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital; Sharon Bentley, director of clinical services, Australian College of Optometry; Jill Hennessy, Minister for Health; Maureen O'Keefe, chief executive officer, Australian College of Optometry and Mark Petty, chief executive officer, The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital.

Above left (L-R): Nathan Efron, head of the ACO's council, Tom Roper (who introduced the VOS when health minister state) and Maureen O'Keefe

Above: (L-R): A child patient with Janelle Scully optometrist, Indiah Jobbitt and Minister for Health Jill Hennessy.

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Ms Maureen O'Keefe, chief executive officer of the Australian College of Optometry, said: "The collaboration between the Eye and Ear and the Australian College of Optometry in establishing a multidisciplinary collaborative glaucoma clinic is a significant step in collectively addressing the complex problems of glaucoma at its various stages and improving patient care."

About the VES

The Victorian Eyecare Service was introduced by health minister Tom Roper in 1985 to improve quality of life for disadvantaged communities by providing affordable, quality, accessible eye care and glasses. Victorians on low incomes and experiencing disadvantage are eligible for the Victorian Eyecare Service

through the Australian College of Optometry metropolitan clinics, outreach services and participating optometrists in rural Victoria.

About the Australian College of Optometry

The Australian College of Optometry is an independent, not-for-profit,

Member-based organisation dedicated to preserving sight and preventing blindness. It was established in 1940 and is dedicated to the care of communities experiencing disadvantage through the provision of comprehensive public-health eye-care services; to supporting the education and development of current and new generations of optometrists and to the advancement of eye-and-vision-care

through research and graduate education.

In 2014 The Australian College of Optometry performed more than 80,000 public health eye-care occasions of service across metropolitan, regional and rural areas.

For further information about the Australian College of Optometry please visit www.aco.org.au

About The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital

The 'Eye and Ear' is Victoria's leading provider of eye-and-ear health, integrating clinical-care, research and education to increase innovation and provide advanced treatments for vision and hearing loss. It cares for around 250,000 patients a year. ■