

Media Release 25 May 2016

LEW Carty-Lions Victoria Joint Research Fellowship

The Australian College of Optometry (ACO) is very pleased to announce that the L.E.W. Carty Charitable Fund and the Victorian Lions Foundation will jointly fund a new post-doctoral research fellowship at the National Vision Research Institute to continue bionic eye research.

The outstanding total contribution of \$360,000 over 3 years, jointly funded by the L.E.W Carty Charitable Fund and the Victorian Lions Foundation, is expected to make a significant difference to people affected by blindness.

Professor Michael Ibbotson, Director, National Vision Research Institute said:

“One approach to returning sight to the profoundly blind is through the development of effective visual prosthetic devices (bionic eyes). The new LEW Carty-Lions Victoria Research Fellow will design the next generation of bionic eye devices and investigate taking visual prosthetics (bionic eyes) from the current prototype stage to something offering true functional vision, where wide-field images can be formed. This will allow a profoundly blind person to experience a more independent quality of life”.

Maureen O’Keefe, Chief Executive Officer of the Australian College of Optometry/National Vision Research Institute commented:

“Sustainable high quality research in Australia is increasingly reliant on philanthropic funding, especially for early career researchers. The vision of the trustees of the L.E.W Carty Charitable Fund and the Victorian Lions Foundation is the creation of a philanthropic partnership through co-funding. This has enabled the establishment of a new postdoctoral research fellowship at the National Vision Research Institute at the Australian College of Optometry, through provision of matching funding of \$180,000 each over three years.”

“Support for early career years for a medical researcher are very important, but also very challenging with fewer than one in five scientists securing federal funding for their research despite more than half of all applications being considered worthy of funding. Younger researchers have to compete against senior researchers for increasingly limited funding, and their lack of an established track record is a significant barrier to success.”

The National Vision Research Institute (NVRI) is a partner in the Bionic Vision Australia consortium and works closely with the physics and engineering departments at the University of Melbourne in developing this next generation of bionic eyes.

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