



AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF
OPTOMETRY
CLINICAL SERVICES • RESEARCH • EDUCATION



NATIONAL VISION
RESEARCH INSTITUTE

ANNUAL REPORT 2022





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OUR VISION

To achieve world-leading eye health outcomes for all



Clinical optometry services

Providing high quality public health eye care for communities in need and leading best practice

OUR MISSION

To improve the eye health and well-being of communities through innovation, partnership and leadership in:



Education

Providing best practice clinical learning pathways for optometrists from pre-registration through to professional practice



Research

Undertaking high impact internationally recognised research to improve the understanding of vision science and eye care



We deeply care about eye health



Everything we do drives this purpose

OUR VALUES

We are led by the following values and principles:



Mutual respect guides our expectations



We foster excellence through collaboration with our patients, partners and teams



Our commitment to innovation pushes us to question and find better ways



We deliver what we promise to patients, partners and each other

WHO WE ARE

The Australian College of Optometry (ACO) is a not-for-profit organisation committed to improving the eye health of communities through public eye care services, clinical research and optometry education. Underpinned by the belief that equal access to care is a basic human right, the ACO aims to assist diverse communities often underserved with culturally appropriate eye care. The ACO is proud to be the only Australian organisation specialising in public health optometry, vision research and student and professional education, each driving improvements in eye health and community well-being.

OUR STORY

First brought to life in 1940 as a teaching clinic, the ACO was the country's first not-for-profit membership institution to teach a four-year full optometry course in 1941.

Since its inception, the ACO has continued to build on its commitment to education. It offers students across Australia with the opportunity of clinical training in a public health setting and designs professional development resources to support the growing needs of the wider optometry profession.

While our education programs continued to evolve, a growing focus on public health emerged in 1955 as the ACO received its first Victorian State Government grant to deliver optometry care to underserved communities. This commitment to the provision of eye care to vulnerable communities was cemented in a pivotal move in 1985, when the ACO became an integral partner in the state government's newly coordinated public health eye care program, Victorian Eyecare Service (VES).

VICTORIAN EYECARE SERVICE

Nearly 40 years later, the ACO continues to administer the Victorian Eyecare Service (VES) on behalf of the Victorian State Government through its own network of patient services as well as in collaboration with participating practitioners across regional Victoria. The initiative has benefited more than two million Victorians to correct refractive error and prevent eye disease. In 2022, more than 64,000 consultations and 40,000 visual aids were provided through the VES to 50,000 patients across the state.

OUR WORK IN THE COMMUNITY

Today the ACO delivers public eye care across its network of clinics, mobile eye care service and outreach programs. It operates nine optometry clinics embedded into communities with an identified need for accessible and affordable eye care. Eight of these are in metropolitan Melbourne, including its main clinic in Carlton, while a single clinic operates in Elizabeth, South Australia.

In 1998, ACO began its Visiting Disability Service to provide eye care to those living with disability in a familiar and safe setting. Since then, ACO's outreach services have expanded to reach other vulnerable communities who face barriers in accessing mainstream care. The ACO provides a coordinated program of clinics and outreach services across Victoria, including services for the aged, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, refugees and asylum seekers, children from disadvantaged schools, people experiencing homelessness and other high-risk groups.

HIGH IMPACT RESEARCH

In the 50 years since the NVRI's establishment it has expanded to conduct basic, applied, and clinical vision research. The institute has reinforced its unique role within the Australian vision science landscape and actively collaborated with several academic and corporate partners to advance eye health. Recent research priorities include: neurotechnology, with a strong focus on the development of prosthetic vision devices (or bionic eyes); clinical optometry; and public health, working to improve the understanding of vision science, vision care and treatment. Through this research, the NVRI and ACO push for innovations that have a wider eye health impact than direct patient services alone.

Acknowledgement of Country



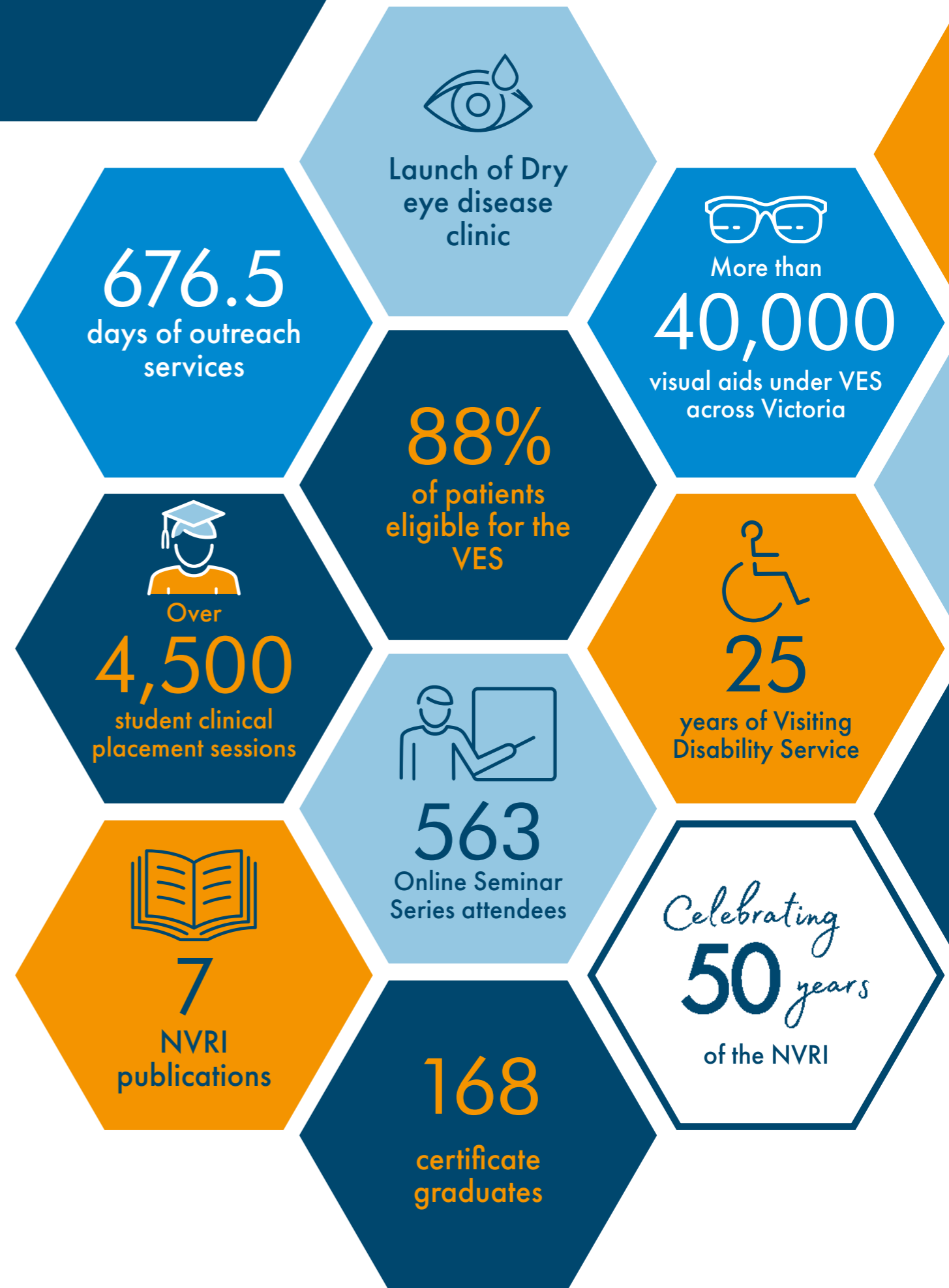
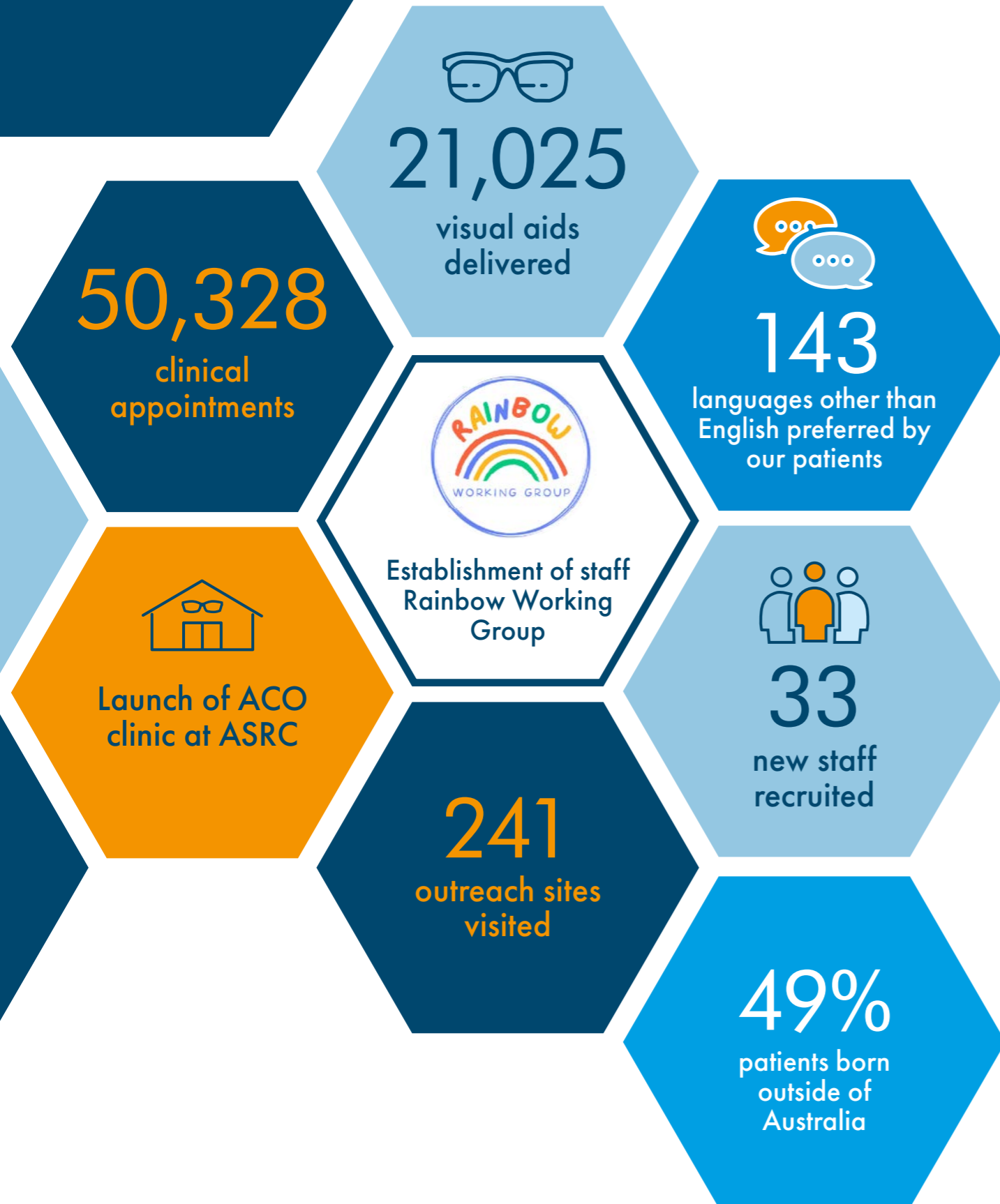
We acknowledge and respect the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live, learn and work. We also pay our respects to their Elders – past, present and emerging.

Statement of inclusion



We are committed to creating a safe and welcoming environment that embraces all backgrounds, cultures, sexualities, gender identities and abilities.

2022 AT A GLANCE



FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO

On behalf of the Council and the Executive Management Team it's a pleasure to be delivering our joint President and CEO Report introducing the ACO's Annual Report for 2022. We will also discuss the shaping of our new Strategic Plan, which occurred throughout the second half of the year.

In early 2022 our operations remained affected by the lingering coronavirus pandemic. This impacted all areas of the organisation, across our clinical services, our research team, our education program and our corporate services staff. It is to the immense and enduring credit of the ACO staff that we continued to provide quality service to our thousands of patients, our dozens of external stakeholders, and our hundreds of Members across the year. We thank each one of them for their hard work under very difficult circumstances.

Broader outlines of the achievements of each part of the ACO and the NVRI are highlighted in the coming pages. We're sure you'll agree that the ACO continues to strive to deliver on its vision and mission.

As we moved into the second half of the year the Council commenced work on the ACO's new Strategic Plan 2023-2026. This pivotal document was completed in December 2022 and will be published in January 2023. We urge all Members and stakeholders to read it. We think it's an honest, transparent, and purposeful strategic roadmap for the ACO.

As the scope of ambition contained in the new strategy emerged, it became clear that our current structures would be unable to support and deliver what was being asked. We agreed that our financial, structural, and cultural problems jeopardised the future of the ACO and needed urgent attention.

In light of this, as the year drew to a close, the Council resolved not to adopt the proposed 2023 budget, and asked the CEO to come up with a new organisational plan and budget that supports the new strategy and plots a course to sustainability.

We acknowledge we are in challenging times and unquestionably we have reached a critical moment in the life of the ACO. What we do now will determine whether the ACO continues at the forefront of optometry, or becomes a 'historical home of optometry'.

Throughout the past year, we have been open about the serious financial situation the ACO is in. We are in persistent structural deficit that will continue to get worse without significant remedial action and transformation. The ACO is at risk after several years of deficit budgets, and we have delivered a significant deficit in 2022. A summary of our finances is available at the end of this Annual Report, and our audited financial statements have been published in line with requirements.

We have a narrow window of opportunity to refocus and reenergise the ACO and secure our financial stability and fulfill our organisation's promise. There is firm agreement between our Council, our people and our stakeholders that the ACO does great, important and unique work that is crucial to the well-being of our society's most disadvantaged. It's essential that the ACO thrives in the future, and right now, we must recognise that we are in a fight to secure the survival of our most basic core services.



As we moved into the second half of the year the Council commenced work on the ACO's new Strategic Plan 2023-2026



ACO's mission is too important to allow financial insecurity, ineffective structures, siloed ways of working and old-fashioned systems to hold us back. These things, if not addressed now, will stifle ACO's ability to be a progressive leader in eye health. The ACO can do more to attract and retain the best and brightest in our profession. We can do more to draw together our strengths in clinical care with utilising our rich data for clinical and public health research. We can be a



centre of knowledge and expand scope of practice for current and future generations of optometrists.

The ACO's new strategic plan sets a clear direction to become the 'next generation ACO' – more collaborative, more modern, an employer of choice, and always relevant because we will deliver what matters, where it counts. That is, improving public eye health and therefore the well-being of the community.

ACO's structural deficit can be overcome, but bold decisions are required right now. We must become a lean, high-functioning workplace, geared primarily to support optometrists to care for patients and advance eyecare. Equally, the ACO's structure must realign to bring together research, teaching and training and education in support of our clinical delivery. The current misalignment of what we research, what we teach, and what we practice impacts our opportunity to deliver the very best in all of these areas.

We must develop an asset masterplan to consider fundamental questions and make decisions that serve our patients and help us return to financial sustainability. We must also strengthen our governance so that we continue to lead with the right tone from the very top. We must focus the budget on evolving our workplace and delivering more for patients, by addressing historic underinvestment in technology and new business systems. We must create a strong people culture that values strong performance, and prioritises employee well-being,

which will underpin all the structural, cultural and technological transformations we need to make.

An exciting path lies ahead for the ACO to be a unique and true leader in optometry, public health eye care and research, as well as education, teaching and training. Solving our problems through transformative change will be challenging, and will need some time, but our task is by no means impossible.

Our people and patients are at the heart of what we do. If we act decisively now, with compassion, ethical and inclusive leadership and with purpose, the future holds great promise. Not only for the ACO, but for the profession and the communities we serve.

We hope you enjoy reading our 2022 Annual Report, and we hope you continue to engage with us in 2023 as we commence the work of organisational transformation.

Sophie Koh
President

Pete Haydon
Chief Executive Officer

OUR FUNDERS, SUPPORTERS AND DONORS

The ACO and NVRI are extremely grateful to all of our funders, donors and supporters. Their support allows us to continue the work that we do across clinical services, research and education.

Clinical Services



Research – NVRI



optiqueline



Schultz Laubman Schultz
Endowment Fund



The Nicola
Family Fund

Beresford
Cambridge Fund

NVRI Governors
Endowment Fund

Donors

Michael Aitken	Shane Duggan	Ultima Nominees	Stephen Ryan
Janice Bastiaan	Malcolm Gin	Rod O'Day	A/Prof Richard Vojlay
Emer Prof Barry Collin AM	Susan Kalff	Dawn Odgers	Nathan Wong
Rachel Denham	John Nicola	Loan Quach	Konstantinos Zagoritis

OUR PARTNERS

The ACO collaborates with some of the leading health, education, research and not for profit organisations from across Australia. It is through these strong partnerships that ACO continues to have a meaningful impact on the community, and we thank them for these partnerships.

Affiliations

Royal Victorian Eye & Ear Hospital

The University of Melbourne

Partners and Collaborators

Aboriginal Health Council of
South Australia

Gawler Health Service

Rural Doctors Workforce Agency

Alfred Hospital

Indigenous Eye Health, University of
Melbourne

Rural Workforce Agency Victoria

Asylum Seeker Resource Centre

International Agency for the Prevention
of Blindness

Swinburne University of Technology

Austin Health

Monash Health

The University of Auckland

Australian Research Council

Monash University

The University of Melbourne

BioMelbourne Network

National Aboriginal Community
Controlled Health Organisation

The University of Wollongong

Bionics Institute

National Health & Medical
Research Council

Think Impact

Brien Holden Foundation

National Health & Medical
Research Council

University of Canberra

Brien Holden Vision Institute

Northern Health

UNSW Sydney

Broadmeadows Health Service

Nunukwarrin Yunti of South
Australia Inc

Victorian Aboriginal Community
Controlled Health Organisation

Carbon Cybernetics

Optometry Australia

Victorian Aboriginal Health Service

Centre for Eye Research Australia

Optometry Victoria South Australia

Victorian Lions Foundation

Centre for Eye Health

Optometry Council of Australia &
New Zealand

Victorian State Government

cohealth

Peninsula Health

Vision 2020 Australia

Commonwealth Government

Reconciliation Australia

Vision Australia

Deakin University

RMIT University

Vision Initiative

Department of Health
(Commonwealth)

Royal Flying Doctor Service Victoria

Watto Purrunga Aboriginal Primary
Health Care Service

Department of Health (Victoria)

Royal Victorian Eye & Ear Hospital

Your Community Health

Eastern Access Community Health

Flinders University

25 YEARS OF VISITING DISABILITY SERVICES

ACO's Visiting Disability Services (VDS) provides eye care services to patients with physical and intellectual disabilities delivered in safe spaces, within community residential units or day facilities. Established in 1997, the VDS has provided over 3000 services to people who may struggle to find appropriate care in commercial practices due to their disability.

VDS was the beginning of the ACO providing regular, co-ordinated outreach services and it is now a crucial component of the broader Outreach Service, which is supported through

the Victorian Eyecare Service with funding from the Victorian State Government.

The demand for optometry services for people with disabilities has increased significantly over the last 10 years and the ACO is committed to removing any barriers to accessing care. Over the 25 years of VDS, great partnerships have been developed with support organisations such as Scope, DoAbility and Life Without Barriers, which each assist people with disabilities.



Partnership in focus – Scope

Founded by a group of families with children living with cerebral palsy, Scope is one of Australia's largest providers of disability support services. Its Supported Independent Living (SIL) arm, Home@Scope, empowers people with disabilities to live more independently.

The ACO has regularly visited the 'Helen St' Home@Scope site in St Albans for the last ten years. Vicki Hearn (pictured), the House Supervisor at Helen St, works with a dedicated team to ensure residents have access to a wide range of services including, but not limited to, high quality health care.

Most residents at the site face complex medical conditions, including poor vision. When discussing the wider implications Vicki says, "When a person has no verbal means of communication, and this is coupled with poor vision, it has a detrimental impact on a person's quality of life and on their ability to communicate effectively with others. An inability to communicate effectively can lead to other areas of concern." Regular eye exams can help detect these vision impairments, provide appropriate support and diagnose other medical conditions associated with poor eye health.

The support staff note that it can be challenging to encourage residents to attend appointments externally and ACO's onsite care makes residents feel safe as they are in a familiar setting. Vicki points out that accessing optometric services in the community may not always be practical for many of the residents, "People with a disability often become anxious



(L-R): Vicki Hearn, House Supervisor, and Dr Josephine Li, Acting Head Rural VES and Community Eyecare Services

in unfamiliar surroundings and are less likely to cooperate during an optometric examination carried out at an optometry practice, making it difficult to obtain an accurate result from the examination."

ACO's collaboration with Home@Scope is helping to ensure that individuals with disabilities receive the support they need for optimal vision. Partnerships such as these are essential for the extended reach of ACO's outreach services ensuring positive health outcomes for all vulnerable individuals in the community.

A day at Home@Scope

Dr Josephine Li, Acting Head, Rural VES and Community Eyecare Services at the ACO has worked with the residents at Helen St for over 10 years building a great rapport with both staff and residents.

Knowing that she will spend the day moving around the home, Josephine sets up her equipment in the dining room, the place that is most accessible to everyone. As each patient Josephine examines has complex communication needs, she must modify standard testing techniques to meet their specific requirements. This requires a very different set-up than one would find in an everyday consultation room and is quite different to most of the ACO Outreach care.



We are grateful for the ongoing support the ACO provides to the residents at Helen Street and have faith in the knowledge that their eye health is in good hands

– Vicki Hearn



With no set testing area, Josephine must remain flexible in her approach and patiently move with residents through the house with mobile equipment, to accommodate their needs in the moment and ensure that they feel at ease. In addition to difficulty communicating with patients, there are often various emotional and physical considerations when providing care in this setting.

With such complex needs, collaboration between optometrists and support workers is essential for a successful and safe assessment with positive patient experience. While some residents are willing to do the tests, others require more persuasion, which is when Vicki steps in. Adopting methods to suit the individual needs of the patient is vital as they frequently go without essential eye care as this cannot be supported elsewhere.

Recalling a consult when Josephine diagnosed a resident with high intraocular pressure, which could have led to vision loss, Vicki says, "Josephine diagnosed a serious medical condition associated with a build-up of pressure in the eyes. The resident had no verbal means of communication and he did not indicate at any time that he was experiencing any form of discomfort. He was immediately taken to the eye and ear hospital for urgent medical treatment. Because of her patience and expertise in supporting people with special needs, Josephine was able to pinpoint the medical condition and make an accurate diagnosis."

VICTORIAN EYECARE SERVICE

Funded by the Victorian Government Department of Health, the Victorian Eyecare Service (VES) has operated across Victoria for over 35 years. The Victorian State Government's ongoing commitment helps provide accessible, quality eye care services and visual aids to Victorians experiencing disadvantage. Whilst the ACO leads the management and delivery of the VES, much of its success comes through its partnerships with community organisations, public hospitals, patient support groups and rural private practices.

Since its inception, it has provided over 2 million services and visual aids through a multi faceted delivery model. The ACO delivers the VES across metropolitan Melbourne through a network of fixed clinics, as well as its outreach program. This is further strengthened by our rural private practice partners

across the state ensuring local access to communities. The VES supports access to care by ensuring a pair of glasses or contact lenses is available to all Victorians on a concession card, refugees and asylum seekers and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The state-wide network of rural private practises in Victoria that have committed to offer the VES, in some cases since its initiation, has been a crucial component of the program's success. The local community knowledge and engagement has helped bring accessible affordable eye care to those who may not be positioned to attend ACO clinics. In 2022, this combined effort has helped reach 50,000 patients across the state who are most in need of the support.

VES Practice Partner – Horsfalls Optometrists

Horsfalls Optometrists is a long-standing optometry practice that has been serving communities in northern Victoria for over 70 years. Established by Henry (Hank) Barber Horsfall in 1953 as Echuca's first-ever optometry practice, it has since expanded to include six consulting rooms across two locations in Echuca and Kyabram.

Horsfalls Optometrists has offered its patients the VES since its inception in 1985. The practice has had numerous patients whose lives have been impacted positively by the VES. For instance, children with high prescriptions have received the necessary care and support to allow them to reach their visual potential and avoid issues such as dense amblyopia.

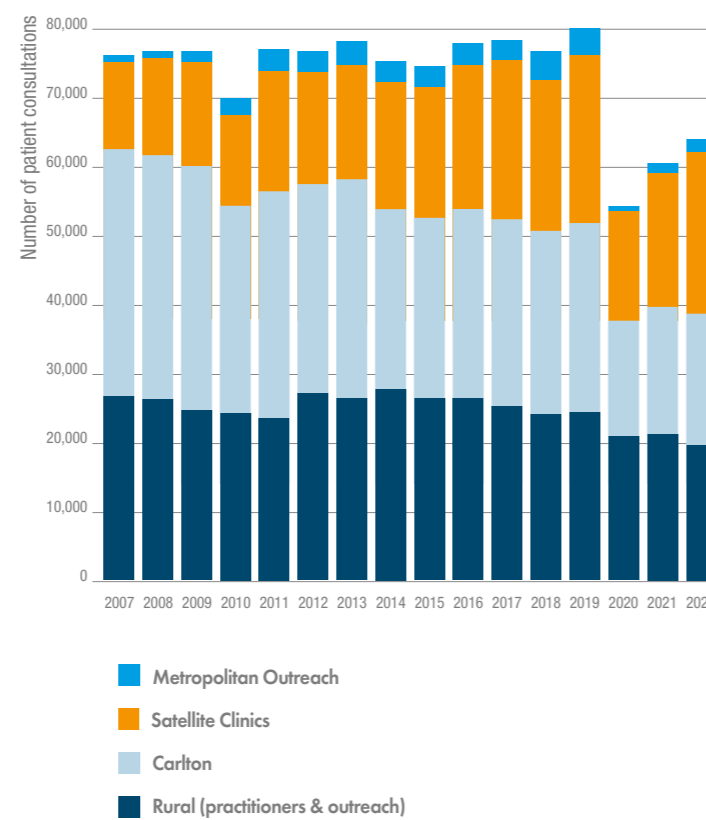
The VES has also made a significant difference in the lives of disadvantaged Victorians, particularly those with limited income. By providing subsidised care to those in need,

Horsfalls Optometrists, along with other VES providers, have ensured that eye issues are not left uncorrected due to financial circumstances.

The town of Rochester is one such community that has especially benefited from the VES in the last few years. After extensive flooding in October 2022, the VES stepped in to provide tailored support for affected communities, such as Rochester. All patients who had lost or damaged their visual aids due to the floods were eligible for replacements free of charge.

Through partnerships such as these, practices such as Horsfalls Optometrists and the ACO are committed to making a difference in the lives of people experiencing disadvantage through the delivery of the VES across the state.

VES Visits



64,000 consultations

40,000 visual aids were provided through the VES





Kalimna (ASRC nurse) and Dzung Tran (ACO optometrist)

LAUNCH OF CLINIC AT ASRC

Asylum seeker and refugee communities experience significant barriers in accessing eye health services due to cost, Medicare ineligibility, low health literacy, language barriers and limited knowledge of Australian health service systems. Providing care in 'standard' setting is unlikely to reach those most in need or produce the best results.

The ACO, in partnership with the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC), has set up an outreach eye care clinic at ASRC's Health Centre in Footscray to deliver culturally appropriate eye care services to asylum seekers and refugees. Supported through the Perpetual IMPACT Philanthropy Program, the clinic has been established based on ACO's expertise and knowledge from running an embedded clinic at the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service for the past 25 years. The ASRC is Australia's largest human rights organisation providing support to people seeking asylum. Their Health Centre provides a range of services and prioritises people without access to Medicare. Over 1400 people receive healthcare services from ASRC each year; for many of the migrant communities, this model of culturally informed healthcare broadens access and increases impact compared to care provided at other unfamiliar locations.

The ACO and ASRC have been long-term collaborators ensuring access to equitable eye care for people seeking asylum and refugees, irrespective of their visa status. For several years, ASRC clients have been referred to ACO clinics or have received care through our outreach programs.

The setup of the integrated clinic has further increased uptake in eye care services - the convenience and the culturally responsive environment of the ASRC means that people who may hesitate to access services feel secure to do so in a familiar setting.



The partnership between ASRC and ACO has made eye care more accessible for people seeking asylum. Providing free glasses and tailored care in a trusted setting has not only removed barriers for our clients, it has enhanced people's overall experience of health care. The work with ACO providing optometry services is a living example of a truly productive partnership.

– Kon Karapanagiotidis, CEO ASRC



30 YEAR MILESTONE

2022 marked thirty years of the ACO's service provision in Melbourne's south-eastern suburbs. Originally located within a community health centre in Doveton, this was the third ACO metropolitan clinic to be established with the commitment to serve a community with a relatively high proportion of the population experiencing disadvantage.

In 2018 it became the ACO's first stand-alone clinic, relocating opposite the Dandenong Hospital. Over the years this move has helped nurture referral pathways from the hospital as well as partnerships with local community asylum seeker and refugee support agencies like AMES.

The Dandenong Clinic is now our busiest metro site, with over 4800 services provided in 2022. It also allows for a robust clinical placement experience for students. The clinic serves a large diaspora, in which English may not be the preferred language at home. 35% of patients speak a language other than English at home (compared to 28% as an average across our clinics) and over 63% were born outside of Australia.

In addition to providing clinical care, the team regularly engages in community awareness drives educating people about the common causes of vision loss, such as diabetes and glaucoma, prevention, and ACO services such as low-cost glasses, translation services, referral pathways for advanced treatment.

The ACO looks forward to the next 30 years of serving the community and continuing to deliver on its commitment of affordable and accessible eyecare for all.



STAFF PROFILE

Dr Ashim Dey

Ophthalmic Assistant, Dandenong Clinic

As an optometrist and vision science researcher, Ashim decided the ACO was the ideal place to bring together his passion for providing eye care to underserved communities and his interest in clinical research.

"The ACO is unlike any other institute in Australia in how it provides such excellent eye care services to the community. Working at the ACO is a privilege. Indeed, it is an excellent experience and worth the time and effort spent in developing a professional career and clinical skills here.

My role as Ophthalmic Assistant involves working as part of the clinical team to support the delivery of optometry consultations by performing basic ophthalmic examinations such as recoding refractive error, intraocular pressure, operating equipment used in diagnosing and monitoring ocular disorders such as diabetic retinopathy, age-related macular degeneration, glaucoma, cataract and other retinal or optic nerve diseases as well as helping the dispensing team whenever required.

In addition to my work at the Dandenong clinic, I support the delivery of the Glaucoma Collaborative Care clinic we run in partnership with The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital. It's a unique platform that significantly reduces chair time for ophthalmologists and glaucoma patients."

LAUNCH OF THE DRY EYE CLINIC

After an initial pilot clinic in 2021, the ACO launched Victoria's first publicly funded Dry Eye Disease Clinic (DEDC) in 2022. It is the only optometry clinic in the state to provide bulk billed diagnostic assessments and low-cost management options for patients of disadvantaged backgrounds.

The need for a dedicated service to address the unique challenges faced by our dry eye patients was recognised. The DEDC aims to provide comprehensive dry eye assessments, in-office therapies and personalised treatment strategies to alleviate the burden of this chronic condition on the quality of life of our patients. With the support of several industry partners, the ACO was able to trial specific diagnostic equipment and therapies

which helped to inform and streamline the daily operations.

The dry eye examination begins with a comprehensive discussion with patients regarding their symptoms and medical history. Optometrists enquire about work, lifestyle, and screen usage to help gauge environmental factors that may affect the patient's dry eye symptoms. Standardised questionnaires are used to benchmark symptomology before a systematic battery of diagnostics tests are conducted using the Oculus Keratograph and slit-lamp observation to elucidate the underlying features of disease. Evidence based diagnostic protocols and management strategies are based on DEWSII recommendations.



The ACO Dry Eye Disease Clinic is the only publicly funded optometry clinic in Victoria to offer bulk billed diagnostic assessment and low-cost management options to patients of disadvantaged backgrounds.

In-clinic treatments such as Lipiflow, Meibomian Gland Expression and Lid Exfoliation are offered, however patients are also informed of proven home-based therapies. Referrals are currently received from other ACO clinics as well as several external sources such as the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital.

ACO DEDC joined the Dry Eye Directory, an online tool that helps to connect patients with their local dry eye specialists as well as educate them about the condition and available treatment options.

STAFF PROFILE

Iris Kolle

Manager of Daily Operations

Iris credits her passion for optometry to her first pair of glasses prescribed at age 5. Eager to make a similar positive impact in other people's lives, she appreciated the ACO's dedication to deliver excellent healthcare to marginalised communities.

"Currently, I'm rotating through the General Clinic, Retina Clinic, Children's Clinic, General Teaching Clinic, Outreach program and am overseeing the Dry Eye Disease Clinic. Being involved in the diverse range of services has allowed me to build my skillset, and to diagnose and manage a variety of eye conditions with increasing accuracy and efficiency. For example, as part of the Dry Eye Disease Clinic, I have been able to make use of the Keratograph and Lipiflow to diagnose and treat dry eye patients. It has been immensely rewarding to be able to gain experience in this speciality.

With one memorable elderly Mandarin patient, she was unable to participate in her favourite pastime, reading, due to severe dry eyes. I prescribed her an eye drop under a government subsidy (otherwise it would be 13 times the price!) and provided her the eyecare she required to return to reading. And due to my language skills (Cantonese and Mandarin), I could ensure that language was not a barrier to her eyecare.

Not every day is without its challenges, but every day I find immense satisfaction that I have been able to make a genuine difference in people's lives."



MEET PATIENT PETER MCLEISH

Sixty-eight year old Peter McLeish lives with an intellectual disability and resides with his 94 year old mother, Nell, in south-east Melbourne. In 2022 Peter's new carer, Mark, encouraged him to learn to read and write after observing his passion for word puzzles. However, Peter's significant bilateral congenital ptosis (drooping eyelids) made this learning journey more difficult.

Peter has managed with this condition for years without any treatment by adopting a chin up position; however, the right eye is almost completely closed when Peter is looking straight ahead or down.

Peter was referred to the ACO by a private ophthalmologist in hopes that a rare ptosis crutch could be fitted. Ptosis crutches are a little-known option and can be an alternative to or a temporary measure before surgery. A ptosis crutch involves a bar being placed along the inside of a spectacle frame that supports the drooping eyelid. The crutch is positioned where the orbital fold would typically be to create a fold above the eye, tucking the lid in and raising it above the pupil. A series of measurements is taken to ensure that the crutch is constructed to suit the wearers eyes.

Optometrist Alice McLennan worked closely with Dave Leeming and Judd Aravena from the ACO lab to fit Peter's custom crutches to his single vision lenses.

Reflecting on the uncommon procedure, Alice said, "The fitting of a ptosis crutch requires significant skill and precision as most optometry practices would have very little experience with fitting a crutch. While the ACO would only do this once or twice a year, we are fortunate that Dave has been an integral member of the ACO lab team for over 15 years and has been involved in the procedure on more than a dozen occasions."

"Peter's case was quite extreme and with any ptosis crutch, accurate measurements are essential for the correct fit. It's always an added bonus when the team in the lab get the opportunity to work directly with patients, as we did with Peter. There's a great feeling of satisfaction when the final fitting comes together and a patient leaves with the right solution for them", Dave commented.

Since his final fitting, Peter has been using his new glasses in short 15-minute sessions to avoid eye dryness and pressure on the skin. Peter, Nell and Mark are considering surgery in the future for a permanent solution to Peter's bilateral congenital ptosis, however the crutch provided by the ACO has allowed him to enjoy his word puzzles and continue his journey to reading and writing.



Dave working on Peter's glass in the ACO lab



There's a great feeling of satisfaction when the final fitting comes together and a patient leaves with the right solution for them

– Dave Leeming



Before



After



CLINICAL TEACHING

As a national leader in clinical teaching, the ACO is committed to educating and training the next generation of optometrists. With over 50 clinical educators and a diverse patient base, the ACO's position in the public health space creates an excellent foundation for a clinical teaching program. Each year the ACO welcomes students from the University of Melbourne, Deakin University, the University of New South Wales, and Flinders University for clinical placements.

Students provide care in a wide variety of ACO clinics including general, contact lenses, low vision, ocular disease, and paediatric clinics. These placements are undertaken across our clinics in Carlton, Broadmeadows, Knox, Dandenong, and East Reservoir.

In 2022 we piloted a 3-student model at Knox Eye Care, where students were actively involved in diagnostic imaging, dispensing, and undertaking extra visual fields as needed. Further, we have implemented an equipment placement for students to become familiar with diagnostic equipment in the clinic. These sessions allowed students to gain practical skills necessary when seeing patients in clinic. At the ACO, providing high quality patient care is our priority and we believe this doesn't end at a consulting room. Hence, students spend a considerable amount of time with our experienced dispensers and lab technicians to learn the ropes of dispensing for a multifaceted learning experience.

Clinical teaching was expanded by providing selective placements in our outreach and Aboriginal services. The selective pilot in low vision clinic placements was updated to offer students a more hands-on experience.

Over 300 students were involved in our clinical teaching program in 2022. We enjoyed a return to pre-pandemic levels with all our university partners, providing over 4,500 student placements across the universities.



University of
Melbourne:

3000

sessions across general,
metro and advanced
clinics.

Deakin University:

Over
60
observations for
year 2

UNSW Sydney:

160
workshops

Flinders University:

over
80
clinical placements
sessions.

Catching up with Flinders Students

In 2022, Flinders University students Kevin Lam and Alexander Rosa joined the ACO for a six-week clinical placement and had the opportunity to gain public eye care experience in a variety of clinics including general, ocular diseases, contact lens, paediatric, low vision and outreach. Being able to have access to such a range of clinics was a top motivation for Alexander and Kevin to apply for this competitive placement, being the only two chosen from their cohort. "I have never heard of a place with so many clinics under one roof. The ACO stands out in Australia as a whole. Its prestige is well justified, and it does make a big difference to the patients" says Kevin. "The students that are in Victoria, shouldn't take this opportunity for granted because we don't have something like this back in SA." Alexander commented.

The ACO proudly serves a diverse patient base which brings in a vast range of pathology. Alexander points out that they couldn't follow the one-routine-fits-all path and have now become equipped at exploring solutions on the go when providing care, "You get set in your ways when you are preparing, you expect to see certain things and then if it doesn't happen you have put so much emphasis on the preparation that anything outside that might throw you off balance." To this Kevin adds, "You never know what a patient could present, and we have built that confidence to see any type of patient."

ACO's clinical leaders are highly accomplished optometrists with a broad range of clinical skills and experience. Both Alexander and Kevin point out that despite having different supervisors each day, one thing they were confident about was that their supervisor would be highly trained

and experienced in that speciality, and learning from industry experts has helped build a solid foundation for their future placements.

When asked whether they would consider joining the ACO upon graduation, without giving it a second thought, both say in unison, "Most definitely".



(L-R): Kevin Lam and Alexander Rosa



I have never heard of a place with so many clinics under one roof. The ACO stands out in Australia as a whole.

– Kevin Lam



STAFF PROFILE

Adine Wield

Part-time optometrist/ Clinical Educator

When a position for a clinical educator became available in 2019, Adine jumped at the opportunity. Since then, she has continued to work in the Carlton clinic three days a week while also working in a corporate optometry practice.

"In the few years prior to joining the ACO, I had helped train two or three students during their clinical placements and I found teaching helped me realise my passion for shaping the next generation of optometrists.

In the last couple of years, the clinical teaching team have piloted and implemented a new equipment placement for the University of Melbourne students. In this session, the students assist optometrists in scans, imaging, and visual field testing, allowing them to become more comfortable with the technology regularly used and increase their exposure to interesting cases.

I believe a placement at the ACO stands out due to its community-based public eye care. Given our focus is on eye health, the students get to see, treat, and manage a wide range of pathology.

I enjoy interacting with students from different cultures and backgrounds, who are eager to learn. It's rewarding witnessing their growth throughout their placement, and to know that the high quality of education we pass on will impact the future of optometry."



CERTIFICATE COURSES

The ACO certificate courses continued to attract a large number of optometry professionals from across Australia and overseas. The Certificate in Ocular Therapeutics offered its tenth intake in 2022. Over 450 optometrists have gained qualification to prescribe ocular medication in this time. Based on a review of the Advanced Certificate of Children's Vision course undertaken by Elisse Higginbotham in 2021, six lectures were updated to ensure the course is current and reflects the best industry practice. The updated course was highly rated in the course survey with 100% candidates stating that they achieved their course expectations. The Advanced Certificate in Glaucoma and Certificate in Advanced Contact Lenses also had minor improvements. We thank the extensive effort and support of the education team, lecturers, presenters, and candidates who help make the program a success.

Meet Optometrist Madeline Baker

ACO Member Madeline Baker enrolled into ACO's Advanced Certificate in Children's Vision in 2022. Madeline is an early-career optometrist based in Melbourne. It was her own experience struggling with a childhood eye disorder that sparked her interest in pursuing optometry, and once settled into her post-graduate role, she was eager to get a deeper understanding of paediatric care.

"Growing up with an infantile esotropia, I spent many years of my young life engaging in vision therapy, visiting the eye specialist, and working my way around prisms and eye patches. These experiences influenced my interest in paediatrics and fuelled my passion to help kids going through similar things to what I did as a child.

I absolutely loved learning about amblyopia and strabismus (particularly given my history with amblyopia) and the expansive neuroplasticity of the adolescent brain and how we can use various techniques to stimulate the visual pathway



Madeline Baker

and improve visual outcomes. Similarly, as the prevalence of myopia continues to rise, myopia control is consequently an ever-evolving space. The modules on myopia control, management and developments were exceptional and provided a well-rounded insight into best practice.

The course not only reconsolidated the paediatric material that was covered during my university days but built on this extensively. I have developed a greater understanding of complex paediatric cases and brought my knowledge up to the most recent evidence-based understanding. The course has also helped my confidence in examining paediatric patients, including how to best work with a range of personality types and age ranges.

Once you are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge, paediatric optometry is an extraordinary area to delve into!"



My main take-away is that paediatric optometry requires clinicians to implement their best detective work and a flexible approach on a case-by-case basis.



IN FOCUS

Seminar Series

Drawing on the expertise of health professionals, researchers and public health advocates, the ACO Seminar series continued to present topics that inform, challenge and broaden the perspective of our Members, staff and optometry students.

The increasing incidence of myopia is an ongoing public health challenge, and Jillian Campbell's presentation on the contact lens management of myopia ensured both soft and hard contact lens options, including orthokeratology, were accessible to novice and experienced practitioners.

As part of a collective and ongoing effort to close the gap in health for First Nations peoples, Rosemary Smith, the Executive Manager of Policy from the Lowitja Institute highlighted the social, cultural and political determinants of health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Rosemary's broad experience highlighted that attention to these non-physiological determinants of health will lead to improved outcomes across many areas of healthcare including screening and treatment of eye diseases.



Rosemary Smith



Therapeutics Refresher Day

After a three-year hiatus, the ACO held its first face to face education event, a Therapeutics Refresher Day, welcoming over 40 optometrists from Victoria and interstate. The one-day workshop comprised of five extensive lectures to help optometrists further their therapeutic expertise and gain practical insights into the contemporary management of keratoconus, myopia, uveitis, glaucoma and more. Attendees discussed case studies and questions in small groups before regrouping with the larger assembly, where they received immediate feedback from presenters.



The topics were relevant and well selected. The interactive session was one of the best discussions I've been to with everyone making input.

– 2022 attendee



100%

agreed the case study material discussed was relevant to their clinical practice

SUPPORTING OUR STAFF TO UPSKILL

Our employees are our greatest assets, and we are committed to providing them with a supportive and inclusive work environment. In 2022, we strove to provide greater investment in our employees' personal and professional development through training programs, mentorship opportunities, and career development initiatives.

A partial rollout of Everything DiSC Workplace Profiles, a self-development tool, was facilitated to strengthen working relationships. We believe this is a fantastic means to create a more engaged, collaborative workforce that can spark meaningful cultural improvement in the organisation— with managers and employees understanding how to best communicate with varying personalities. In 2023, we anticipate an additional rollout helping us to drive strategies to suit the needs of employees based on their personality and the ACO's culture.

Newly appointed supervisors completed a management course developed to provide them with a 'toolbox' of practical tips and techniques for effective leadership when dealing with challenges and to prepare for senior management positions.

We were also fortunate to receive government funding to support five staff members, who did not hold formal dispensing qualifications, through Australian College of Optical



I just wanted to say a very big thank you for organising my attendance to the 'made it to managers' course. It was valuable and a very insightful learning experience. Thank you for encouraging and facilitating these opportunities."

– Zeinab Fakhri, Lead Optometrist of Paediatric Services



Dispensing's Certificate IV Optical Dispensing traineeship. Having access to funding has been pertinent in being able to support staff in upskilling and in turn providing top quality patient care to communities that we serve.



I would like to thank the ACO for giving me the opportunity and support to enhance my skills to help provide the best patient care."

– ACO Dispenser



98

staff members supported through DiSC

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

The ACO is committed to creating safe and respectful environments for people accessing our services, staff and students. As an organisation we are working towards creating a more inclusive and accepting environment for everyone.

In 2022 our Rainbow Working Group (RWG) was created with the purpose of ensuring a safe and welcoming organisation for all stakeholders. The staff working group was established with enthusiastic volunteer members, full of ideas for how we can approach inclusivity and safe and welcoming for LGBTQIA+ staff, patients, and visitors. The RWG are committed to providing more opportunities for staff to show signs of allyship, education and to make the ACO a safe place for members of the LGBTQIA+ communities.

We celebrated diversity at the ACO by recognising a variety of holidays and significant dates. Some highlights included our annual Harmony Day celebration where staff wore orange to celebrate and participated in creating handprint murals which now hang in the People & Culture meeting room.

During Ramadan, staff learned about the significance of the month and enjoyed dates, a popular way for Muslims to observe iftar (the breaking of the fast).

Our Reconciliation Working Group continued to work hard towards achieving our deliverables in our Innovate RAP. This included attending a roundtable, facilitated by Vision 2020, where similar organisations were able to share resources and discuss the challenges and successes of their RAP journeys.

We celebrated NAIDOC Week with a seminar presented by Rosemary Smith from the Lowitja Institute. The seminar titled "The social, cultural, and political determinants of health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders" was attended by staff and industry stakeholders. Staff who couldn't attend could watch the recording and have discussions throughout the week in 'Lunch & Learn' sessions featuring wattle seed scones.

It was also our second year of running a mindful month initiative, Mindful March. This is a great opportunity to engage with staff around the importance of mindfulness and mental health well-being. In partnership with CompNow, our IT provider, we were able to offer staff full membership to Mindful, an Australian based mindfulness app with meditations, sound baths and more. Another popular activity was the Gratitude Wall, which encourages staff to think about the positives in their life that they are grateful for and add this to the notice board.



Pronoun pins distributed to staff on International Pronouns Day



Celebrating 50 years

In 2022 the NVRI acknowledged 50 years of vision research and its important role within the Australian vision research community. Over this time, the NVRI has grown from a single topic research lab to being engaged in approximately 25 different topics areas, with a focus on strengthening the pathway from basic research through to medical outcomes for patients. Essential to this growth is the collaborative work with external partners such as the University of Melbourne and industry partners such as Carbon Cybernetics. These collaborative relationships were carefully fostered by NVRI Director Michael Ibbotson since assuming his position in 2011.

The NVRI boasts a talented research alumni who have continued to excel in the research space, making great impact and reaching new heights internationally. A number of these past researchers took part in the 50th celebration by sharing stories of their time with us in the form of 'Alumni Spotlights'.

On 22 November, 50 years to the day since the NVRI began, past and present researchers, collaborators and supporters came together for a celebratory event held at ACO Carlton. Many of the researchers who played significant roles in developing the NVRI were welcomed back, meeting with current researchers and exchanging stories of their time with the institute, including the people and projects that made a difference to them along the way. Former NVRI Directors Prof. Robert C Augusteyn (1991 – 2002) and Prof. Paul Martin (2002-2009), joined us for the celebration and together with current Director, Prof. Michael Ibbotson, they represented 29 years of NVRI leadership.



Researcher Yiqing Shen discusses her current research with former NVRI researcher Prof. Shelia Crewther



(L-R): Prof. Paul Martin, Prof. Robert C Augusteyn and Prof. Michael Ibbotson



My early research career at the NVRI provided me with a nurturing and stimulating research environment. I had the guidance and the freedom I needed to kickstart my career. I also received ample financial support to travel nationally and international for lab visits to learn new skills, and to attend conferences to showcase my research.

– Dr Molis Yunzab, Former NVRI Researcher



RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

There are some achievements from 2022 that deserve a special mention.



Prof Michael Ibbotson was as a speaker at the prestigious Bernstein Conference in Germany to present NVRI's visual evolution research.



A National Health and Medical Research Council Development Grant was awarded to advance retinal implant technology.

Dr Wei Tong was invited to present at the Annual Conference for Australasian Biomaterials and Tissue Engineering on her research relating to the development of diamond coated carbon fibre microelectrodes in collaboration with the School of Physics at the University of Melbourne.

Clinical research had international impact as a result of a successful grant application to present a joint workshop with the Hokkaido University in Japan. These were focused on the role of allied health, including optometry, in supporting people to age well in their communities.

The team commenced two clinical research projects with Centre for Eye Research Australia (CERA) for the first-in-Australia trials of a new paediatric myopia control device and the use of ACO data as part of an international myopia study funded by the NHMRC.

Clinical research was successful in securing Victorian Optometrists Training and Education (VOTE) funding to develop training to assist with the management of dementia patients.



The NVRI undertook a clinical research program that strengthens links within the ACO to build on the data and knowledge of our clinics.

Work with UoM, RMIT and Carbon Cybernetics commenced to develop a new flexible electrode. Phase 2 of the pre-clinical trials have been success and major efforts are underway to raise funds for next stages of research.



NVRI researchers were invited guest editors for Frontiers in Neuroscience journal focused on "Nanomaterials for Communicating with the Brain".

Groundbreaking visual evolution research was published in the prestigious Science Advances journal. Dr Jason Jung (first author on the paper) has been invited to present at the Gottingen Meeting of the German Neuroscience Society in 2023.



CLINICAL RESEARCH

Dr Marianne Coleman (Piano), as NVRI's clinical research leader, continued to build the clinical research program in 2022. The year saw the commencement of the Repeated Low Level Red Light Therapy randomised controlled trial, sponsored by Eyerising International, which enabled myopic children attending the ACO clinic to participate in myopia control research. Children were randomised to receive an innovative myopia control device to use at home, or to continue with single vision spectacles for one year. The research is spearheaded by Dr Lisa Zhu and Prof Mingguang He from the Centre for Eye Research Australia (CERA). Dr Marianne Coleman is working closely with Nellie Deen (ACO Head of Specialist Services and Clinical Care), and Di Miao (CERA) is supporting the trial onsite.



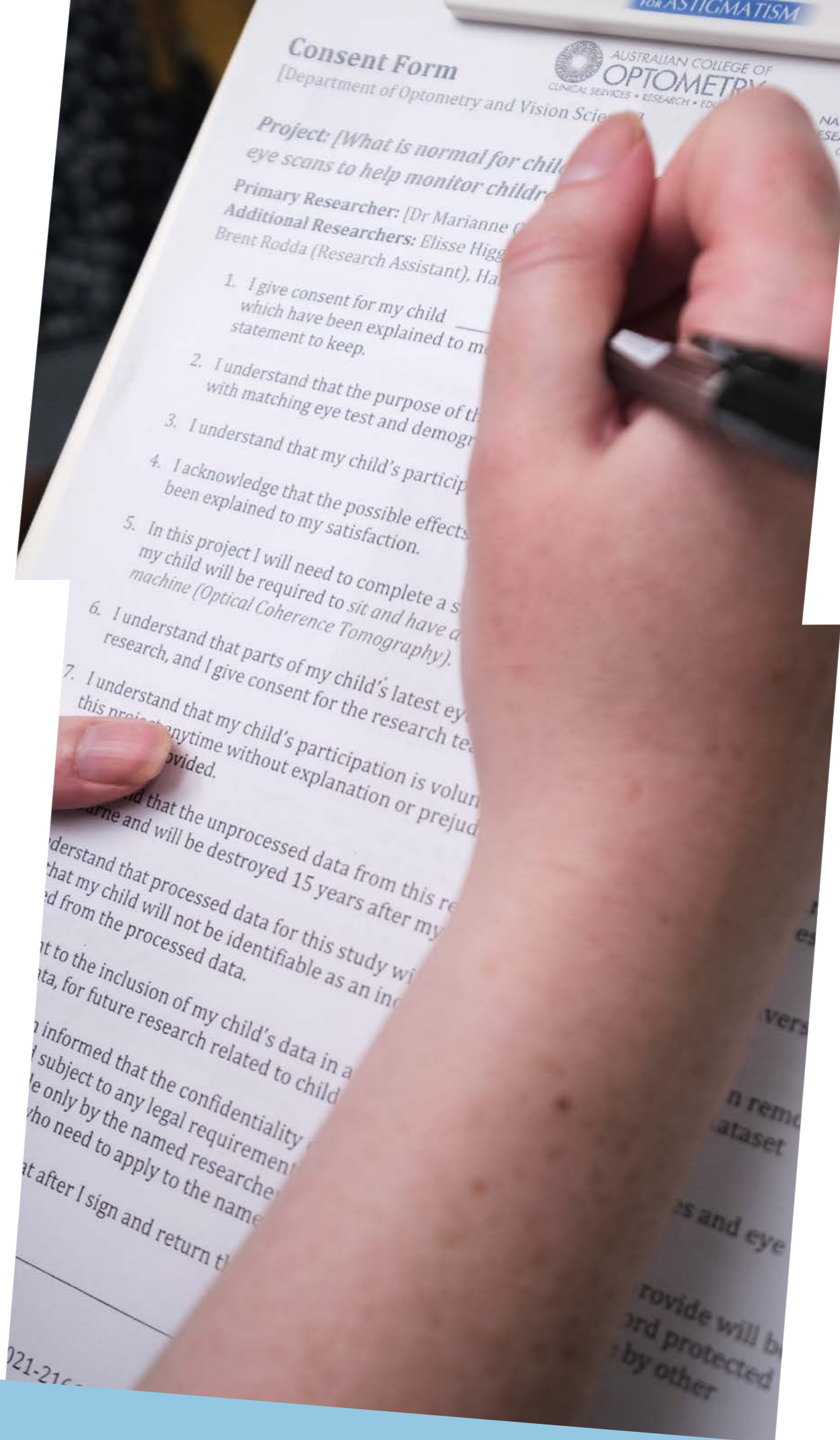
The Repeated Low Level Red Light Therapy randomised controlled trial enabled myopic children attending ACO clinic to participate in myopia control research



A collaboration with the Graduate School of Health Sciences at Hokkaido University in Japan was initiated to run a successful interdisciplinary case study afternoon focused on healthy ageing, attended by over 70 allied health professionals and clinical students from Australia and Japan. This was funded by the University of Melbourne-Hokkaido University Joint Research Workshops Fund.

A Victorian Optometrists Training and Education (VOTE) grant was secured to support development of specialist course content for the dementia-friendly eyecare training course for optometrists. This funding will ensure the training course equips optometrists to manage responsive behaviours exhibited by people living with dementia that may arise during a routine eye examination, such as anxiety or agitation. Dr Coleman is a Co-Investigator on a major Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) project led by the University of Queensland to explore vision and hearing interventions for people living with dementia receiving home care.

Recognising her experience, Optometry Australia has invited Dr Coleman to be involved in their national dataset project, as part of the Clinical Indicators Working Group and the Data Governance Committee.



STAFF PROFILE

Dr Marianne Coleman,

NVRI Clinical Vision Research Fellow

As Clinical Vision Research Fellow, Marianne holds a jointly funded position between the NVRI and The University of Melbourne. Embedded as part of the ACO, this rare clinical research position aims to build a program of clinical research involving ACO patients, clinicians and clinical data, resulting in appropriately designed research and delivery of findings sooner.

"Clinical research used to be research on people, but now it's much more about doing research with people. This is reflected in the way research is funded now; they want to know how your work is going to make a difference and how long it will take.

The experience and knowledge that ACO clinic staff have is vital to inform the design of practical, feasible projects that are compatible with clinic operations. This lets me present sensible projects to funders.

Today, it's important to be agile and responsive to funding opportunities. The ACO has a huge patient base and a wide variety of clinical specialty areas, as well as a very important public health mandate that could expand into other areas as the role of the optometrist and scope of practice expands."

NICOLA TRAVEL GRANT

The Nicola Family Fund was established in 2015 to support early career researchers. The ACO and NVRI are grateful to John Nicola and his family for their ongoing support. COVID-19 travel restrictions limited our use of this important travel fund over recent years. The NVRI are delighted to once again be communicating their work to the scientific community.

Dr Jason Jung was sponsored by the Nicola Family Fund to accompany NVRI Director Prof Michael Ibbotson to the Bernstein Conference Satellite meeting, 'Major transitions in cortical circuit evolution', held in Berlin during September 2022. Michael was an invited speaker and took the opportunity to take Jason who was the first author on a recent *Science Advances* publication, which formed the basis of new findings being presented at the meeting.

Having both the senior and first authors at the meeting, enabled in depth conversations with other visual scientists and a series of meetings after the event to discuss a new collaboration. This research is considered so significant in the field, that Jason has been invited to return to Germany in March 2023, to present at the Göttingen Meeting of the German Neuroscience Society. This is a major achievement for both Jason and the NVRI to be acknowledged as world leaders in the field of cortical evolution.

We are very appreciative to the Nicola family for providing the opportunity to fully fund Jason's attendance and increase his international profile while still in the early stages of his career.

Dr Young Jun (Jason) Jung completed his Bachelor of Science with Honours at the University of Melbourne in 2017, majoring in neuroscience and physiology. Jason commenced his PhD at the NVRI in 2018, focusing on understanding how visual signals processed in the retina are translated in the visual cortex. In 2021, Jason was appointed the Lions NVRI Vision Fellow to link the research that has been successfully undertaken in the retina and taking the next steps to implant the newly designed carbon-based technology electrode arrays directly into the visual cortex.

(L-R) Prof Kerstin Schmidt, Dr Jason Jung and Prof Michael Ibbotson in Berlin

PUBLICATIONS BY NVRI STAFF AND STUDENTS

Neurotechnology Publications

1. Silveira C, Khushaba R, Brunton E, Nazarpour K (2022). Spatio-temporal feature extraction in sensory ENG. *Philosophical transactions of the Royal Society A* 380(2228):20210268 doi: 10.1098/rsta.2021.0268
2. Almasi A, Sun SH, Yunzab M, Jung YJ, Meffin H, Ibbotson MR (2022). How stimulus statistics affect the receptive fields in primary visual cortex. *Journal of Neuroscience* 24 May; JN-RM-0664 doi: 10.1523/JNEUROSCI.0664-21.2022
3. Yunzab M, Soto-Braceda A, Maturana M, Kirkby S, Slattery M, Newgreen A, Meffin H, Kameneva T, Burkitt AN, Ibbotson MR, Tong W (2022). Preferential modulation of individual retinal ganglion cells by electrical stimulation. *Journal of Neural Engineering*. 19 (2022) 045003 doi: <https://doi.org/10.1088/1741-2552/ac861f>
4. Jung YJ, Almasi A, Sun S, Yunzab M, Cloherty SL, Bauquier SH, Renfree M, Meffin H, Ibbotson MR (2022). Orientation pinwheels in primary visual cortex of a highly visual marsupial. *Sci. Adv.* 8 eabn0954, 30 September 2022. <https://www.science.org/doi/pdf/10.1126/sciadv.abn0954>
5. Tong W, Ibbotson MR, Ghezzi D (2022). Editorial: Nanomaterials for communicating with the brain. *Frontiers in Neuroscience* 16 918949 doi: 10.3389/fnins.2022.918949

Clinical Publications

6. Piano M, Veerhuis, N, Edwards, E, Traynor, V, Carey, N (2022). Having the conversation about vision for safe driving with older adults: An exploratory study of eyecare professional experiences in England and Australia. *Clinical and Experimental Optometry* p1-9 doi: 10.1080/08164622.2022.2105642
7. Piano MEF, Nguyen BN, Gocuk SA, Joubert L, McKendrick AM (2022). Primary eyecare provision for people living with dementia: what do we need to know? *Clinical and Experimental Optometry* doi: 10.1080/08164622.2022.2140032

Research Dissemination

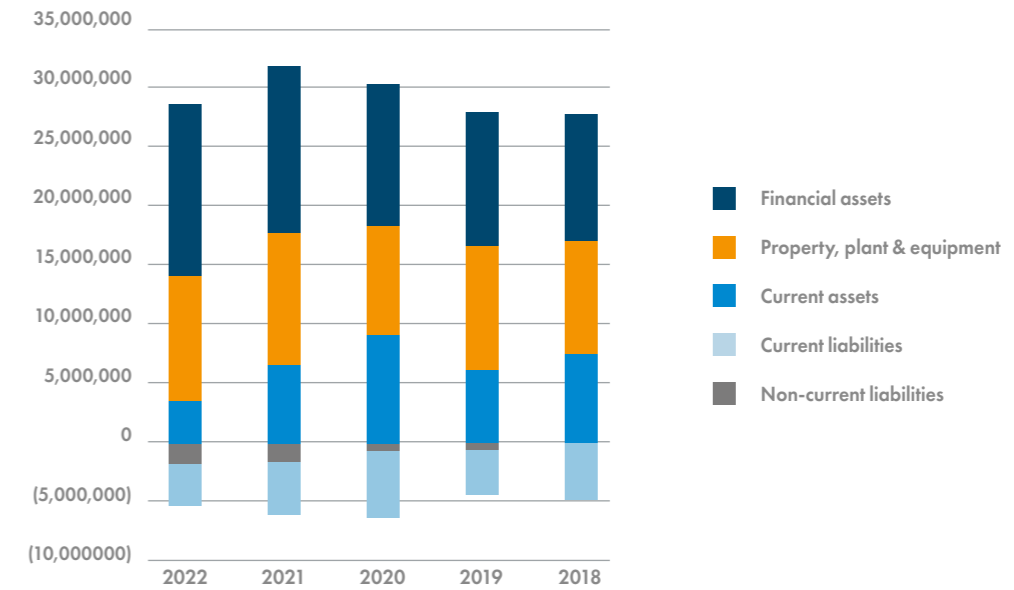
1. The Australasian Society for Biomaterials and Tissue Engineering (ASBTE 2022), 20-22 April 2022.
 - 1.1. Diamond coated carbon fibre microelectrodes for neural stimulation, recording and neurotransmitter sensing. Wei Tong, Maryam Hejazi, Michael Ibbotson, Steven Praver, David Garret. (oral)
 - 1.2. Enhancing neurite outgrowth employing light-induced oxygen terminated nitrogen doped ultrananocrystalline diamond. Samira Falhatdoost, Wei Tong, Danli Peng, Andre Chamber, Alastair Stacey, Michael Ibbotson, Arman Ahnood, Steven Praver. (poster)
2. Australian Dementia Research Forum 2022, 30-31 May 2022. (virtual event)
 - 2.1. "All bets are off" – Current practice and experiences of Australian optometrists when performing eye examinations for people living with dementia. Marianne Piano. (poster)
3. Invited lecture at Dalhousie University, Halifax Canada. 24 June 2022.
 - 3.1. Orientation maps in visual cortex: origins. Michael Ibbotson
4. Biomedical Engineering Research in Neuromodulation & Electric Medicine Conference, Quebec, Canada, 27-30 June 2022.
 - 4.1. Recent advancements in animal electrophysiology. Michael Ibbotson (oral)
 - 4.2. Pre-clinical studies of carbon fibre electrode array in rodent models. Jason Jung (oral)
5. Bernstein Conference Satellite Workshop "Major transitions in cortical circuit evolution", Berlin, Germany, 13-14 September 2022.
 - 5.1. Origins of marsupial V1 functional architecture. Michael Ibbotson (oral)
6. Invited speaker at Behavioural and Economics Science Cluster seminar "Foundations of decision making", University of Queensland, 15 November 2022 (online)
 - 6.1. The visual system can be selective and not selective at the same time. Michael Ibbotson (oral)

FINANCE SNAPSHOT

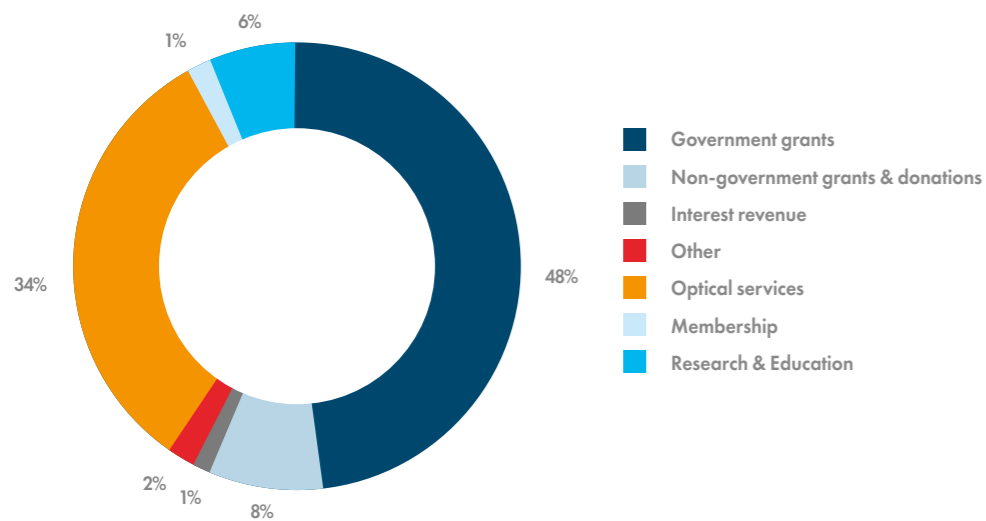
Results for the year

	CONSOLIDATED GROUP		ACO	
	2022	2021	2022	2021
	\$	\$	\$	\$
NET RESULTS FOR THE YEAR	(662,223)	10,559	(702,364)	62,767
COMPREHENSIVE INCOME	(1,172,418)	1,153,905	(75,167)	67,216
COMPREHENSIVE RESULTS	(1,834,641)	1,164,464	(777,531)	129,983

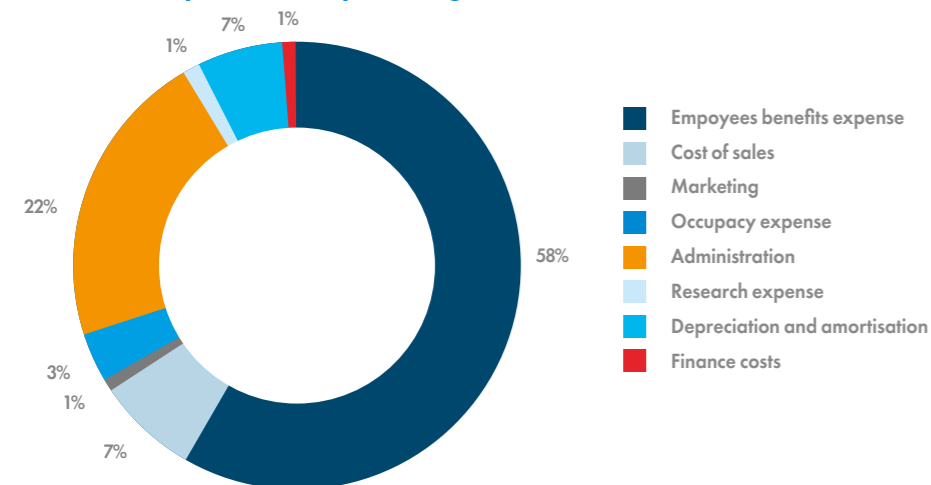
Balance sheet – Consolidated group



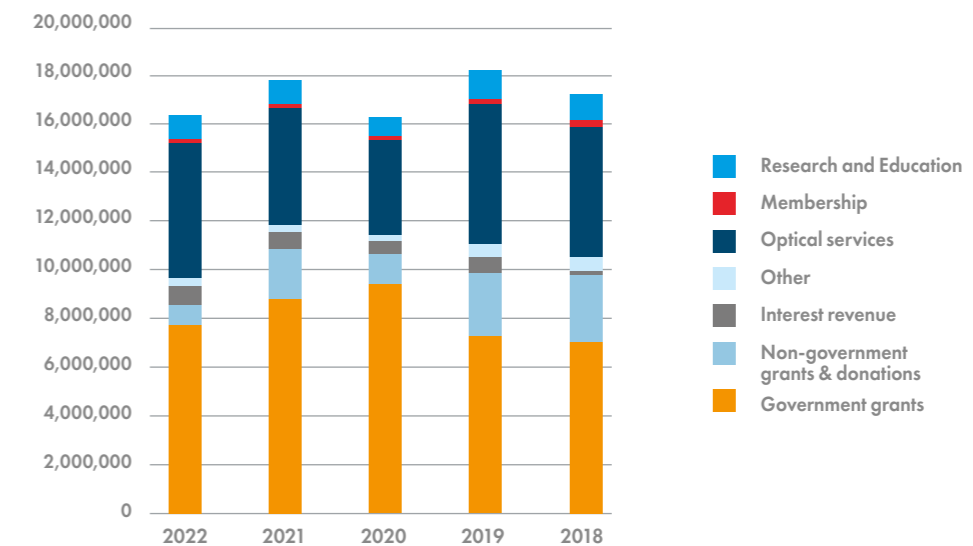
ACO Income – operating activities



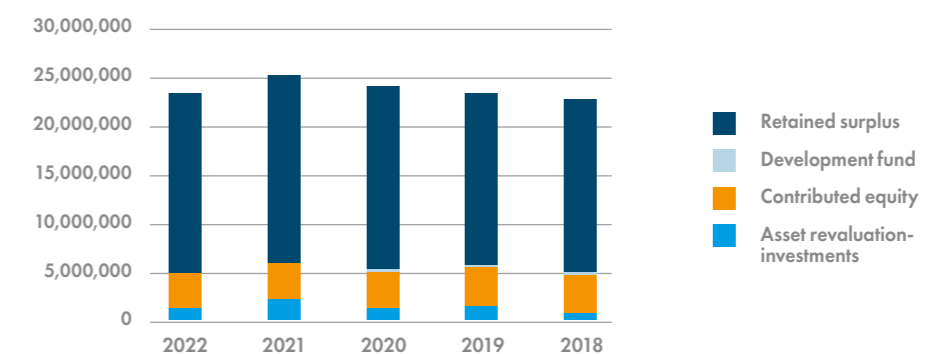
ACO Expenses – operating activities



Income from operating activities – Consolidated group



Equity details – Consolidated group



ACO's Full Consolidated Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2022 can be found at www.aco.org.au/aco-publications

ACO AWARDS

Every year, the ACO recognises Members and non-members for their exceptional service and commitment to the optometry profession and vision research. Here are our award winners from 2022.

ACO Member Award for Outstanding Service

Awardee:
Colin Bates

With an optometry career spanning over 40 years Colin Bates has always been committed to providing optimal patient care by building long lasting relations in the community. Upon retirement, he joined ACO's Kett Optometry Museum as an honorary archivist. Colin was a vital part of the team that oversaw the establishment of the Aitken Gallery and continues to make significant contribution towards preserving and showcasing the history of optometry, especially with his knowledge of optometric instrumentation and contact lenses.

Recognising the valuable contribution of Members towards the ACO.

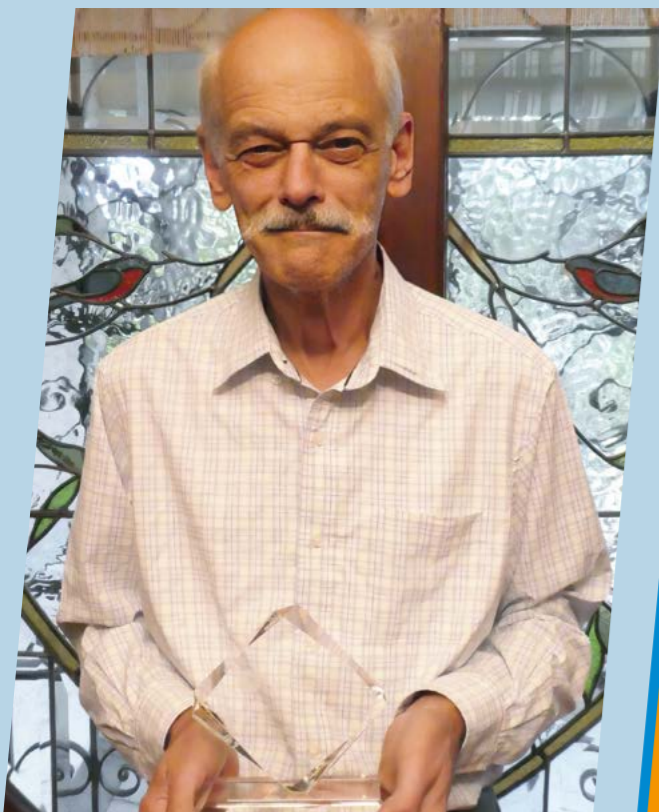


ACO Fellowship 2022

Awardee:
Dr Zhichao Wu FACO

"It is a privilege to be recognised with this fellowship by the ACO – the place where I started my professional career and that motivated to embark on a clinical research career to tackle vision loss, especially for those most in need."

Granted to Members upon application who have showcased exceptional contribution to the practice and profession of Optometry. The applicant must qualify under one or more professional expertise.



NVRI Fellowship

Awardee: Professor Nathan Efron AC

Professor Nathan Efron AC has been a leading researcher in vision science including the functioning of the cornea and the development of safe and physiologically compatible contact lenses, investigation of non-invasive ophthalmic markers of diabetic neuropathy. Professor Efron was the foundation Chair of Clinical Optometry at the University of Manchester, England. During his decade long tenure, he made significant contributions to its growth going on to serve as the Head of Department, and eventually the Dean of Research.

Over the years Professor Efron has had a long association with the NVRI, being a great supporter and having served as the Chair of the NVRI Board of Administration as well as the ACO Council. His distinguished service to the NVRI and the larger optometry and research community is highly commendable.

Awarded to researchers who have made a significant contribution to the practice and profession of vision science.



Nicola Family Fund Travel Grant

Awardee: Jordan Siberras

Jordan Siberras graduated with a Bachelor of Biomedical Science from the University of Queensland after completing an Honours project researching the changes to the visual system caused by autism. He joined the NVRI in 2020, and his work focuses on researching the visual cortex.

The Nicola Family Fund was established to support early career researchers. This grant sponsors travel for NVRI researchers to communicate their work to the scientific community.



ACO Outstanding University Graduate Award

Awardees:

Deakin University:
Madeline Baker

Flinders University:
Eilish Devlin

University of Melbourne:
Jessica Atme

UNSW Sydney: Ayman
Saleh Moussa

Queensland University of
Technology: Kristin Parker

The ACO is proud to recognise and support the future of the profession with this award. Each Australian Optometry school nominates one outstanding graduate based on a combination of academic excellence and professional commitment.

ACO Outstanding Graduate Award for Certificate in Ocular Therapeutics

Awardee: Rachel Smeal

"I am honoured to be receiving this award in recognition of my efforts through the ACO therapeutics course. It has been invaluable in developing my clinical skills and knowledge as a forward step in my career goals."

Awarded to the candidate who has achieved the highest score across all assessments for their graduating year in the Certificate in Ocular Therapeutics.



Madeline Baker



Eilish Devlin



Jessica Atme



Ayman Saleh Moussa



Kristin Parker

ACO MUSEUM AT OPEN HOUSE MELBOURNE

The ACO's Kett Optometry Museum was selected to participate in the 2022 Open House Melbourne (OHM), an initiative to explore the city's significant buildings, foster appreciation for architecture and discussion about the future of our cities.

ACO's honorary archivists led the program with guided tours of the museum where visitors got a peak of the extensive collection including a showcase of historic spectacles, a replica 1930s consulting room and an impressive display of eye baths while learning about the history of optometry.

Keeping in sync with the OHM theme, 'Built/Unbuilt', the visitors were given a brief overview of the design of the ACO,

including how several buildings had been incorporated into the current one. The program then included a visit to the Nathan Library followed by a tour of the Aitken Gallery. Commencing with the Library, visitors were shown a curated selection of antiquarian books from the Aitken collection. A 1706 edition of Newton's Optics was the highlight. In the Gallery, visitors expressed particular interest in the large display of spectacles, especially those with a personal story, such as a pair found on a WW2 battlefield and spectacles worn by two Prime Ministers. Items with artistic designs such as eyebaths and decorative spectacle cases also garnered great interest, as did the evolution of some instruments used in eye examinations.



ACO COUNCIL

The ACO is governed by a Council, which acts as its Board of Management, playing a vital role in shaping the strategic direction of the ACO and fostering an environment in which the vision and mission of the organisation is achieved. Elected ACO Members, alongside skill-based appointments, bring their expertise from various walks of life including optometry, education, law, finance and the healthcare sectors. They are elected to ACO Council for a two-year term.



Sophie Koh,
President (from June 2022)



A/Prof Lauren Ayton



Darrell Baker
(from May 2022)



The Honorable John Chaney
(until May 2022)



Prof Linda Denehy
(until December 2022)



Theodora Elia-Adams, CA
(from November 2022)



Sayuri Grady
(from July 2022)



Denise Gronow, CA
Honorary Treasurer



Rodney Hodge
(President until June 2022)



Tim Powell,
Vice President



Dr Michelle Waugh

IN MEMORIAM

Jean Cole PSM

15 May 1928- 3 June 2022

Jean Cole (nee Colledge) PSM was the beloved wife of the late Professor Barry Cole AO and was a key figure at the ACO for many years. Jean was the Secretary of the ACO from 1964 to 1994. She came to the ACO with experience in the corporate world in Melbourne and London as secretary.

At the time there were only two other full-time staff, Barry Cole and Barry Collin, so in addition to being the Chief Financial Officer and the Secretary to Council, Jean was also the clinic receptionist. She was very much involved in the rapid growth of the ACO: its expanding clinical services, the starting of the Victorian Eyecare Service, the Low Vision Clinic at Kooyong, fund raising for and the establishment of the NVRI for which she negotiated the property purchases.

Jean was awarded the Public Service Medal (PSM) in the Queen's Birthday honours list in 1990 for her contributions to the public good through the development of the ACO and co-founding the NVRI. She was made an honorary life member of the ACO upon her retirement in 1994 and was awarded life membership of the NVRI in 2011, for the pivotal role she played in founding and in garnering support for the institute.



Dr John Nathan OAM

5 June 1924 - 15 May 2022

John Nathan OAM played a significant role in shaping both the ACO and the profession. He was the first Licentiate of Optometric Science (LoSC) diplomate of the ACO in 1944. John went on to become the ACO Clinic Director from 1947 to 1949 and was then appointed Director of Studies in 1950 – a position he held for 14 years.

His work as Director of Studies helped to lay the foundations for the well-respected LoSC course to become a degree course at the University of Melbourne, testimony to John's high standards and clinical leadership. Recognising the importance of research to the profession, John played a significant role in the establishment of the first optometry research team in Australia in 1961: Barry Cole, Geoffrey Henry and John Nathan.

He served on ACO Council for 30 years and was President from 1970 to 1978. During his time as President, the ACO established the National Vision Research Institute. John was honoured with life membership of both the ACO and Optometry Australia and he was bestowed an honorary Doctor of Science by the University of Melbourne in 1994. In 2013, he was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for his services to optometric education.



Associate Professor Leo Hartley

24 February 1955 - 13 May 2022

A renowned clinician, educator, researcher and advocate for optometric advancements, A/Prof Leo Hartley was one of Australia's most prominent optometrists. He was also a general practitioner trained in rural, remote and indigenous health providing patient care in Australia and overseas. In addition to his optometric and medical practice, A/Prof Hartley was involved in collaborative research on retinopathy of prematurity and perinatal vision.

A/Prof Hartley's passion for serving the community was supplemented by his regular voluntary work in Vanuatu, to provide free medical care- both as an optometrist and GP. He also worked alongside colleagues to establish a grassroots long-term education program for eye care workers in Vanuatu.

With a career spanning over decades, A/Prof Hartley was a big champion for advancing optometry, in particular embracing therapeutics as a part of optometry. He actively advocated for this within the profession, with universities to include therapeutic training, and finally the government, lobbying to pass the Acts of Parliament required to legalise the use of the medications for appropriately trained optometrists.

A/Prof Hartley was an active member of several optometry and medical peak bodies. He served as the past President of Optometry Victoria as well as the Vice President of Optometry Queensland. He was the recipient of several awards for his significant contribution to the community, medicine and the profession of optometry.



OUR MEMBERS

We thank all our Members for their continued support of the ACO and NVRI. Each one of our Members forms an integral part of ACO's public health eye care endeavours.

ACO Life Members

1954 Cyril W Kett	1968 Geoffrey H Henry	2011 Graham O Hill OAM, FACO	2015 Kenneth Bowman AM
1955 George H Giles OBE	1970 Arthur BP Amies CMG	2012 Ross Harris, FACO	2016 Assoc Prof Rodney D Watkins AM
1960 Ernest H Jabara	1975 Dr David M Cockburn OAM, FACO	2012 Prof Hugh Taylor AC	2018 Emer Prof Nathan Efron AC, FACO
1960 William F Johns	1976 Bruce K Besley, FACO	2013 Wolfgang Gartner, FACO	2018 Margaret Banks OAM, FACO
1960 Josef Lederer	1980 Donald H Schultz	2013 Anthony Gibson OAM, FACO	2019 Emer Prof Leo Carney
1960 Bertram Nathan	1981 J Lloyd Hewett OAM	2013 Assoc Prof Ian Gutteridge, FACO	2019 Dr Damien Smith, FACO, FAAO
1960 Leslie RC Werner	1981 Emer Prof H Barry Collin AM, FACO	2013 Dr Anthony Hanks OAM	2020 Bryan Fuller FACO
1961 Lady Meriel Wilmot-Wright	1990 Prof Barry L Cole AO, FACO	2014 Prof Ian Bailey	2021 Michael Aitken
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1963 William D Wright			
1964 Dr Jonathon Nathan OAM, FACO			

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VES LOCATIONS AND PRACTICES

Victorian Eyecare Service (VES) Rural Practices & Victorian Aboriginal Spectacle Subsidy Scheme (VASSS) Practices*

Spread across metropolitan and regional Victoria, the ACO acknowledges the ongoing care and commitment provided by our VES and VASSS partner practices. The impact and extended reach of these services would not be possible without their dedicated participation.



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|--|--|---|---|
| Ararat
Quinn & Co. Eyecare | Benalla
Focus on Laurimar | Castlemaine
Eyeworks | Echuca
Horsfalls Optometrists*
Quinn & Co. Eyecare |
| Bacchus Marsh
Darryl Wilson Optometrists by George & Matilda Eyecare | Bendigo
Cartwright & Associates Eyecare Plus | Cobram
Cobram Optical | Edenhope
Quinn & Co. Eyecare
Horsham |
| Bairnsdale
Eyecare Plus Bairnsdale * | Bright
Eyes of Bright | Curlewis
Spectacle Hub Optometrists | Euroa
Graham Hill & Associates |
| Ballarat
GMHBA Eyecare | Bunyip
Bunyip Optical * | Daylesford
Darryl Wilson Optometrists by George & Matilda Eyecare | Foster
Foster Medical Clinic |
| Belmont
Robinson Family Optometrists * | Camperdown
Penry Routson Optometrists * | Dromana
Eyes on Dromana | |

Geelong

GMHBA Eye Care*
New Vision Eyewear

Gisborne

J.C. Merrington Optometry
Simon Leong Optometrist

Hamilton

Glenn Howell Pty Ltd*

Healesville

Harris, Blake and Parsons

Highton

Eye Gallery Geelong

Hopetoun

Quinn & Co. Eyecare*

Horsham

Quinn & Co Eyecare *
Specsavers Horsham

Kerang

Kerang Optical*

Kilmore

Ian Wood Optometrist
by George & Matilda
Eyecare *

Korumburra

South Gippsland Optical

Kyabram

Horsfalls Optometrists

Lakes Entrance

East Gippsland Eyecare

Lang Lang

Lang Lang Eyecare

Lara

New Vision Eyewear

Leongatha

Leongatha Optometrists
Pty Ltd
McCartin Street
Optometrists

Leopold

GMHBA Eye Care

Lorne

Deakin Optometry

Mallacoota

Dyson & Long Optometrists

Maryborough

D P Hare

Mildura

Quinn & Co. Eyecare*
Quinn & Co. Eyecare
Mildura Plaza*
Mildura Optical

Moe

Moe Optical

Mooroopna

Graham Hill & Associates

Mornington

20/20 Sight 'N Style
Main St Eyecare

Morwell

Latrobe Eyecare

Murchison

Graham Hill & Associates

Myrtleford

Alpine Eyecare

Nathalia

Horsfalls Optometrists

Nhill

Quinn & Co. Eyecare

Norlane

Winks Eyecare

Newtown

Dresden Vision Geelong

Ocean Grove

Bellerine Eyecare

Orbost

Eyecare Plus

Pakenham

Pakenham Optical

Portland

Portland Eyecare

Rosebud

Eyes on Rosebud
Robert P Zent Optometrist

Sale

B W Pettitt

Seymour

Focus on Laurimar

Shepparton

Graham Hill & Associates*
Shepparton Optical
Services

Somerville

Eyes On Optometrists

Stawell

Quinn & Co. Eyecare

Swan Hill

Quinn & Co. Eyecare

Torquay

GMHBA Eye Care

Traralgon

Kay Street Eyecare

Wangaratta

Wangaratta Eyecare*

Warracknabeal

Quinn & Co. Eyecare*

Warrnambool

Penry Routson Optometrists*
Somer Toprak Optometrist
Warrnambool Eyecare*

Waurm Ponds

Deakin Collaborative Eye
Care Clinic
GMHBA Eye Care

Wendouree

Darryl Wilson Optometrist
by George & Matilda
Eyecare

Wodonga

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Wonthaggi

Akers Eyewear*

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B W Pettitt

Yarrawonga

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read this notice and let
us know how you feel about
the way we do things in our
store.

if you have any questions about
this notice or the way we do things
in our store, please let us know
and we will be happy to help.