



**Brien Holden
FOUNDATION**

AUSTRALIAN EYE AND EAR HEALTH SURVEY

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday, 3 March 2022

Australian Eye and Ear Health Survey launched on World Hearing Day

For the first time, both eye and ear health in Australia will be assessed in a national study of the prevalence, risk factors and impacts of vision and hearing loss in the community.

Macquarie University Hearing hosted the official launch of the Australian Eye and Ear Health Survey this morning, to coincide with World Hearing Day.

About 5,000 people will take part to help researchers build up a broader picture of the nation's eye and ear health.

This is the first hearing survey to be conducted, and the second time vision will be studied.

The survey is sponsored by the Australian Government Department of Health with support from Macquarie University to conduct the ear health component. It brings together investigators from seven institutions: the Westmead Institute for Medical Research's (WIMR) Centre for Vision Research, Macquarie University Hearing, The University of Sydney, The School of Optometry and Vision Science, UNSW Sydney, The George Institute for Global Health and The Brien Holden Foundation.

Director of WIMR's Centre for Vision Research, Professor Paul Mitchell AO, is leading the study, and Inaugural Cochlear Chair in Hearing and Health at Macquarie University Hearing, Professor Bamini Gopinath, is leading the ear health component.

Professor Gopinath said vision and hearing loss were key health issues in Australia, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

"Among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 40 and older, more than 11 per cent have a vision impairment or are blind, and up to 82 per cent have some form of hearing loss," Professor Gopinath said.

"Our researchers will be doorknocking in eligible communities in city, regional and remote areas to invite people to take part, with the focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 40 and older and non-Indigenous Australians aged 50 and older.

"Participants will have their vision and hearing tested, and will be surveyed to help us build up a picture of what sort of factors are influencing hearing and vision loss, and how these impairments affect people."

Vision 2020 Australia is a national body working in partnership to prevent avoidable blindness and improve vision care, and the organisation advocated strongly with the Australian Government for this second survey to be held.

Vision 2020 Australia CEO Patricia Sparrow welcomed the launch of the survey, as it will provide critical eye and ear health data for use by government, health sector and other stakeholders.



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“Data is critical to planning and delivering sight saving treatments and supports, as well as tracking progress towards eliminating and preventing avoidable vision loss,” Ms Sparrow said.

“Vision 2020 Australia members across the eye health and vision care sector are keen to contribute to the survey and utilise the data to better support individuals who experience eye conditions or vision loss.”

The Australian Eye and Ear Health Survey will begin in coming weeks in NSW, and is expected to take about two years to complete.

Findings from the study will contribute to Australia’s commitment to eradicate avoidable blindness in fulfilment of the United Nations General Assembly resolution *Vision for Everyone: accelerating action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals*; and *Integrated people-centred eye care, including preventable vision impairment and blindness*, adopted by World Health Organisation Member States.

The survey will also fulfil several of the key priorities and actions outlined in the Australian Government’s Roadmap for Hearing Health.

[Read more](#) about the Australian Eye and Ear Health Survey.

About the survey partners:

WIMR’s Centre for Vision Research

The Centre for Vision Research studies eye diseases and the problems with the eye associated with other conditions such as obesity and coronary artery disease. The Centre’s research aims to understand why eye diseases occur – the prevalence, incidence and risk factors - as well as the genetic and environmental conditions that may threaten vision. Professor Paul Mitchell is Director of WIMR’s Centre for Vision Research and the lead researcher on the Australian Eye and Ear Health Survey. He has a full-time academic appointment as Professor of Ophthalmology at the University of Sydney (Westmead Hospital). He works clinically as a medical retina specialist and is Ophthalmology Director for the Sydney West Local Health Network. His clinical focus is on management of age-related macular degeneration (AMD), diabetic retinopathy and other vascular retinopathies and on systemic diseases effects on the eye.

Macquarie University

Macquarie University is a global hub of hearing and hearing-related research, education and engagement. We combine academic strength, clinical expertise, and a visionary approach as we seek to transform hearing health policy and practice and hearing-related endeavours. We deliver world-class education for clinicians and researchers to transform their understanding of hearing and hearing health, and are working to empower healthcare professionals, individuals and communities to reduce the global burden of hearing loss.

UNSW Sydney

UNSW Sydney is one of Australia’s leading research and teaching universities with strong regional and global engagement. UNSW Sydney creates an academic environment where outstanding students and scholars from around the world can be inspired to excel in their programs of study and



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research. Partnerships with both local and global communities allow UNSW Sydney to share knowledge, debate and research

outcomes. The School of Optometry and Vision Science at UNSW Sydney is one of the largest in Asia and the only Optometry School in NSW. The School is committed to forming partnerships with ophthalmic industry and across the health care sector, and is focused on translational research which will lead to practical application and significant improvements in ocular health.

The George Institute for Global Health

The George Institute is a leading independent global medical research institute established and headquartered in Sydney, with additional major centres in China, India and the UK, and an international network of experts and collaborators. The Institute's mission is to improve the health of millions of people worldwide, particularly those living in disadvantaged circumstances, by challenging the status quo and using innovative approaches to prevent and treat non-communicable diseases and injury.

Brien Holden Foundation

The Brien Holden Foundation is an Australian NGO that works in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to improve access to optometry services as part of their broader primary health care programs, contributing towards the prevention of avoidable vision loss through access to full eye examinations, access to glasses and referrals to specialists. Brien Holden Foundation provides services directly, guides policy through participating in relevant sector working groups and committees, conducts research, develops and delivers eye health training to primary health care practitioners, and actively collaborates with other organisations working with these communities.

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