

# EYECURE.

NEWS FROM THE QUEENSLAND EYE INSTITUTE FOUNDATION  
ISSUE 11 | SEPTEMBER 2019

## WELCOME

Welcome to the latest edition of Eyecure which I hope you find an enjoyable read. I'm delighted to announce that QEIF's Last Seen Exhibition will be launched at GOMA on Southbank on Wednesday, 13 November 2019. The paintings, which depict our participants' last memorable or dearly held vision of this world, will be auctioned at the event to raise valuable funds to support QEIF's sight saving work – please turn to page 4 for full details.

Mark Radford, CEO



## CLAYFIELD QEI CLINIC IS NOW OPEN

The new Clayfield QEI Clinic is now open, and at the end of July we welcomed our first patients at the new facility located at 695 Sandgate Road, Clayfield 4011. QEI Clinic's Corneal and Anterior Segment Surgeon Dr Brendan Cronin, Medical and Surgical Retinal Specialist Dr Abhishek Sharma and Cornea, Cataract, Laser and Refractive Eye Surgery Specialist Dr David Gunn are currently conducting clinics at the Clayfield QEI Clinic.

Clayfield QEI Clinic recently welcomed over 80 Optometrists to an Optometry Education series event with speakers including QEI Clinic's Dr David Gunn and Dr Abhishek Sharma.



LAST SEEN  
AN EXHIBITION



## QEIF WELCOMES THREE RESEARCH INTERNS FROM FRANCE

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Kamsana Vijayakumar arrived from Sorbonne University (Paris) and is undertaking research on surgical adhesives as part of her MSc degree. The project is based on chemically functionalising a protein called sericin, created by silkworms and isolated from silk cocoons. This leads to the formation of adhesive gels able to seal surgical wounds and hold the tissues together. Kamsana has carried out difficult synthetic work to produce reagents used

to modify the sericin and is engaged with producing sericin-based hydrogels and assessing them as adhesives. Professors Idriss Blakey (UQ) and Tim Dargaville (QUT) are external co-supervisors on this project.

Noémie Gallorini and Pierre-Guillaume Champavier are from Polytech Marseille. Noémie's topic is the experimental degradation of hyaluronic acid. This material is used extensively in the cosmetic industry as an injectable dermal filler, and episodically can cause the occlusion of retinal arteries and blindness. The effects of an enzyme and of ultrasound on hyaluronic acid is currently being investigated in QEIF's

laboratories. Dr Tai Smith is Noémie's co-supervisor. Pierre-Guillaume, under the co-supervision of QEIF Research Officer Dr Jenny Young, is carrying out extensive laboratory work to assess the anti-oxidative effect on retinal photoreceptor cells of the sericin produced by a mutant silkworm race created by Japanese scientists. The oxidative stress, an imbalance of free radicals and antioxidants in the body which can lead to cell and tissue damage, is recognised as a cause for certain retinal degenerative conditions and finding factors with antioxidant properties is important to eye health.



Front row: Dr Jenny Young, Kamsana Vijayakumar, Noémie Gallorini, Dr Shuko Suzuki  
Back row: Professor Idriss Blakey, Pierre-Guillaume Champavier, Professor Traian Chirila, Professor Tim Dargaville



## QEIF'S WEBSITE IS LIVE

QEIF launched a new website at the end of May with a modern design and easier navigation. Conforming to AAA (the highest) levels of accessibility, the site has quick links to book appointments at the QEI Clinic, information on preparing for your visit and a blog with all the latest updates on the QEI Clinics and QEI Foundation, updates on our research projects, upcoming events including Last Seen and our latest patient stories. There is also a streamlined donation capability.



## MARIO PENNISI JOINS THE QEIF BOARD

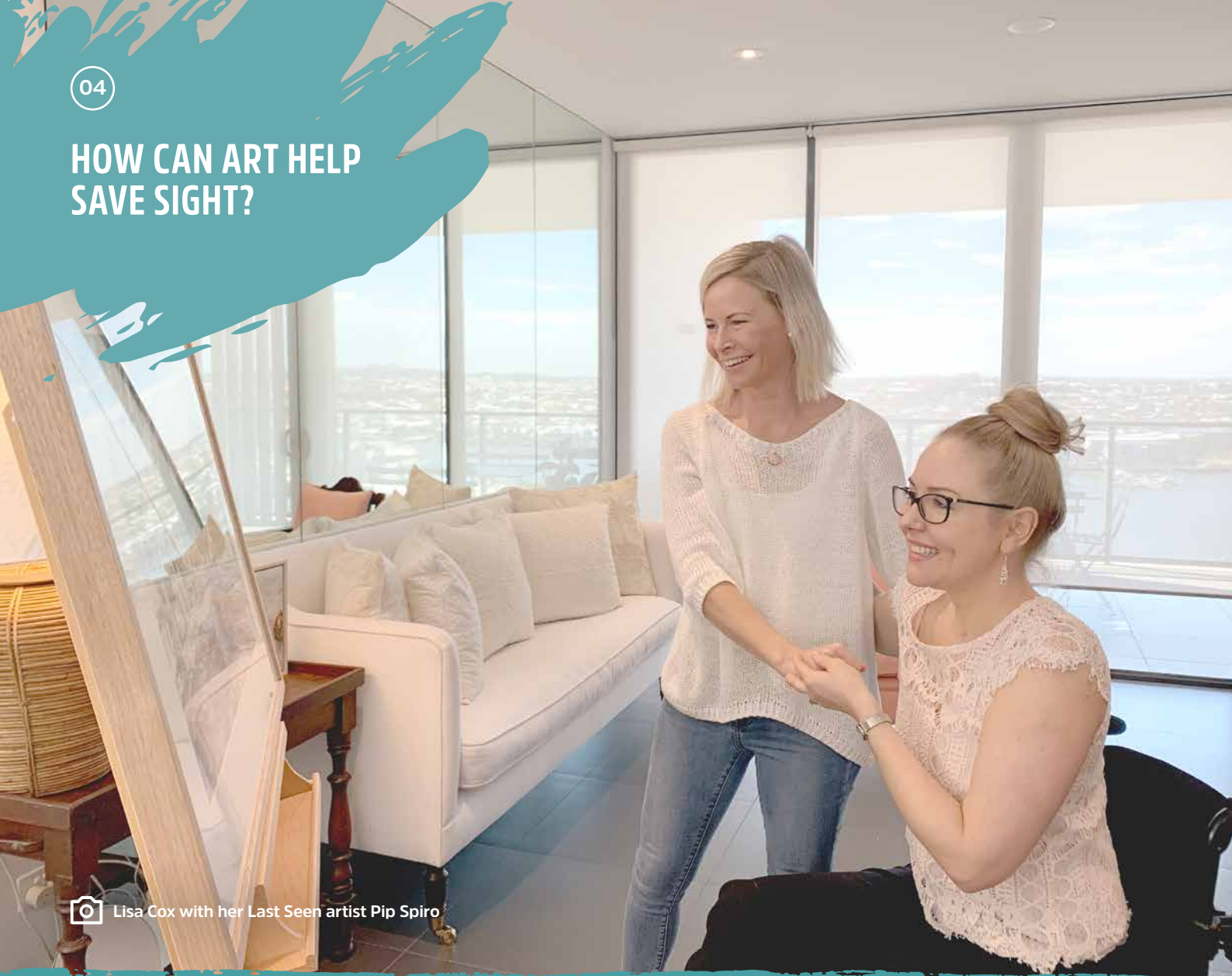
QEIF is pleased to announce the appointment of Mario Pennisi as a Non-Executive Director. Mario has more than 30 years' experience in managing and growing commercial operations in the life sciences industry.


He is a member of The University of Queensland Medicine and Biomedical Sciences Faculty Board, the Chairman of Griffith University's Clinical Trials Advisory Committee and a Member of the Queensland Government's Biofutures Industry Advisory Group. He is also a government-appointed Member of the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) Council, and associated committees.

Mario's Non-Executive Director roles include Elo Life Systems Australia Pty Ltd, Alpine Immune Sciences Australia Pty Ltd and Suncare Community Services Ltd. Previous roles include executive positions at Sullivan Nicolaides Pathology and Mayne Group as well as serving as CEO of Life Sciences Queensland Ltd. and Queensland Clinical Trials Network Inc.

Chair of QEIF, Mark Sheridan, said "We are excited to have Mario join the QEIF Board at this stage of our development. With Mario's experience and insight into research and clinical trials, together with his credentials as a Non-Executive Director, we are looking forward to harnessing his skills to support our sustainability and innovation strategies to achieve our purpose of saving sight."

## HOW CAN ART HELP SAVE SIGHT?



 Lisa Cox with her Last Seen artist Pip Spiro

Last Seen is QEIF's innovative fundraising and awareness campaign which will take you through the incredible stories of our patients, ambassadors and supporters. The participants have been partnered with influential Australian artists to create a series of artworks depicting their last or dearly held memory before their sight deteriorated.

In 2005, 24-year-old Lisa Cox was rushed to hospital after she collapsed at Melbourne Airport. Tests and scans revealed a significant bleed in her brain caused by a rare strain of the streptococcus-A virus, which resulted in her internal organs shutting down, one by one. She spent three weeks in a coma and two months on life support.

Lisa's extremities had turned gangrenous, and despite initial concerns that she could lose both legs and one arm, surgeons amputated nine fingertips, all of her toes and one leg. The permanent damage to her brain has affected Lisa's speech and memory, left her 25% blind, epileptic and frequently fatigued.

Lisa doesn't consider herself a victim and she knows what it's like to start all over. Since she hit restart, Lisa has had many personal and professional achievements. She's started her own business, written two books, become a professional public speaker and met and married her husband. We've asked Lisa why she decided to get involved with Last Seen and what this campaign means to her.

***"Last Seen is a unique and innovative way to draw attention to an issue that needs greater awareness. I've lost a lot of things because of my disabilities but losing part of my sight was definitely one of the hardest. Vision impairment is an 'invisible disability' for me, but it is far more disabling than my wheelchair, prosthetic leg or other things you can see," says Lisa.***

*"The campaign includes a diverse mix of participants and challenges the mindset of, "it'll never happen to me". The project also challenges the*



*stereotype that people with vision impairment only look a certain way or are only of a certain age. It educates the audience that vision loss can happen to anyone, at any age,"* she explains.

Lisa hopes Last Seen will also remind people how important their sight is. *"Having no leg doesn't really impact my life that much but having poor sight impacts me every day."*

Lisa's most dearly held visual memory is a street with overarching trees in Melbourne. Her home was a 200 meter walk to the tram, and while she hated the daily walk in the sun, wind or rain, she would now do anything to be able to walk down the street and see those trees the way she used to.

Lisa has been partnered with Brisbane-based artist, Pip Spiro. Pip is best known for her vivid, large scale botanical and still life paintings. Inspired by her natural surrounds and a quintessential Queensland upbringing spent embracing the outdoors, Pip's aim is to make art that gives space for a simple appreciation of and connection with beauty.

Pip says once she understood the kinds of people and stories that would make up the Last Seen project she was immediately compelled to be a part of it.

***"Vision is a sense that forms so much of our life experience; when you stop to think about just how different it would be without full sight, it is very humbling," Says Pip.***

*"Using art as a way into the last and most precious visions of the world that people can no longer see, is such a clever and hopefully impactful way to shine a light on what this loss of sight can mean, and hopefully it opens up the discussion and brings awareness to this. For me, hand in hand with contemplating what this 'loss' might feel like is a recognition of the immense strength, perseverance and tenacity it must take to soldier through the hurdles that vision impairment must bring. I have so much admiration for Lisa. The hurdles are many and so much that we take for granted is not a given for her, yet she continues on with such positivity and purpose and just gets on with it,"* she says.

*"Lisa's 'Last Seen' is a departure from my usual still life and botanical subjects. I didn't have a first-hand account nor much reference for the street and initially found this challenging as my painting eye is trained to re-create every last detail I see..."*

*the irony here was not lost on me! Ultimately I embraced this and enjoyed drawing on Lisa's descriptions and memories of the street to capture all of this for her, which felt really fitting. I wanted to convey the colour and light and feeling of the street she remembers, rather than every last detail,"* says Pip as she explains how the project challenged her as an artist.

*"Some people may be born without sight and some may lose it along the way, which can be through quite devastating and traumatic circumstances. For those in the latter, the memories that remain of the faces, places and things they treasure the most are often all they have. This fills me with so much emotion, to think that this could be taken from anyone at any time; but also has made me think a lot about the weight of memories and how important they are to all of us. At the end that's often all we have. It has also been a great dose of perspective and a reminder that so many people are fighting their own battles, we all just have to do is to do the best with what we've got and be kind,"*

For more information on Last Seen and to purchase tickets, please visit [www.lastseen.com.au](http://www.lastseen.com.au)

# LAST SEEN

AN EXHIBITION

**QEIF is hosting two events at GOMA on Wednesday, 13 November 2019 to launch the Last Seen Exhibition and we would be delighted if you could join us.**

## **PREVIEW LUNCH, GOMA ROOF TERRACE**

A unique opportunity to view the Last Seen artworks before they are auctioned at GOMA later that evening, and hear the emotive stories of the Last Seen participants.

**12pm start. Tickets \$150 each.**

## **COCKTAIL PARTY & AUCTION, GOMA RIVER LOUNGE & PAVILION BALCONY**

Join us to view the artworks with live entertainment, meet the Last Seen artists and participants and bid on the artworks to raise vital funds for QEIF.

**6pm start. Tickets \$150 each.**

Enquiries and to purchase tickets, please visit [www.lastseen.com.au](http://www.lastseen.com.au) or contact Dorottya Geczi at QEIF on **07 3239 5003** or email [lastseen@qei.org.au](mailto:lastseen@qei.org.au)



QEIF's Mark Radford, Jane Dodds and Anna Blake with the team of Specsavers Bundaberg

## QEIF'S MACULA DAY

We welcomed over 110 guests who learnt about the symptoms, risk factors and treatment options of age-related macular degeneration (AMD), including prevention measures, low vision aids and technologies. Thanks to our speakers; QEI Clinic Retina, Macula Specialist and Vitreoretinal Surgeon, Associate Professor Anthony Kwan, QEIF Visiting Scientist, Dr Audra Shadforth, QEIF Community

Relations Manager, Jane Dodds, Macula Disease Foundation Partnership Manager, Colette Kinsella and Quantum State Manager, Peter Cracknell. Special thanks also to QEI Clinic patient, Margaret who shared her story of living with AMD. We would like to say thank you to the Macula Disease Foundation for their support with the event.

## THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING OSCAR AND QEIF

In QEIF's Tax Appeal we highlighted the story of Oscar, QEI Clinic's young patient who has endured over 18 operations to control his congenital glaucoma. Oscar has now developed a cataract in his glaucoma affected eye.

Unfortunately, in June Oscar had to undergo another surgery to control his eye pressure and QEI Clinic's Dr Mark Chiang managed to bring the pressure from the high mid 30's to 23.

We would like to thank you very much for the outstanding support you showed Oscar and our Tax Appeal. With your help QEIF has the potential to save sight and improve the lives of people with vision impairment like Oscar.


Oscar is involved with QEIF's new Last Seen project, an awareness and fundraising initiative. Oscar is partnered with artist Adam Lester, who

is painting Oscar's dearly held memory of visiting the beach for the first time after he was given the green light by Dr Chiang. Oscar says he felt like his whole family missed out on going to the beach for a long time because of his condition and it was a very special moment for him at Main Beach on the Gold Coast. For more information on Last Seen, please see page 4.



Oscar with his Last Seen artist Adam Lester



 Mark Radford with George Curphey and Rex Freudenberg

## THE LEGACY OF CHARLES VIERTEL

George Curphey, former Trustee and Chair of the Sylvia & Charles Viertel Charitable Foundation and current Trustee, Rex Freudenberg recently visited QEIF to share their memories of Charles Viertel as a friend and businessman, and how the relationship between the Foundation and QEIF has developed over the last 30 years.


Charles Viertel, was born in Queensland with a humble upbringing. An achiever since childhood, he received a Bachelor of Commerce from The University of Queensland and became an Accountant and Company Director. Charles was an astute investor, and at the time of his passing in 1992, he was one of Queensland's most successful share market investors. His wife, Sylvia had severely impaired vision and Charles also had eyesight problems. After being treated by Dr John Ohlrich, the couple saw Professor Lawrence Hirst, former QEIF CEO at the Princess Alexandra Hospital where he was an Ophthalmologist. In 1986 the Chair of Ophthalmology was established at The University of Queensland with, amongst others, the generous support of Charles Viertel and Professor Hirst was appointed as Chair.

Charles established the Sylvia and Charles Viertel Charitable Foundation in his will and in addition, named three Queensland organisations as beneficiaries, including the Prevent Blindness Foundation (now Queensland Eye Institute Foundation).

QEIF CEO, Professor Mark Radford chatted to George and Rex about the impact achieved via the Sylvia and Charles Viertel Charitable Foundation funding, including the special grant which saw QEIF establish its state-of-the-art facilities at 140 Melbourne Street, South Brisbane.

George, Rex and Mark were filmed whilst they were chatting, ensuring the legacy of Charles Viertel is kept alive and a legacy which is a vitally integral part of QEIF's history and its purpose to save sight.



 Charles Viertel OBE

# HOW QEI HELPS TO SAVE SIGHT



**Your donation is gratefully appreciated. Help us save money by donating online. Visit [qei.org.au](http://qei.org.au) or call 07 3239 50 50.**

Your donation today will help the QEI Foundation save sight through its research, education and clinical care.

Yes, I want to help the QEI Foundation.

Enclosed is my donation of:  \$15  \$25  \$50  Own choice (please specify amount): .....

Please find enclosed a:  cheque  money order (made payable to Queensland Eye Institute Foundation).

Please debit my card:  Visa  Mastercard  Amex

Card Number:                 Expiry:   /

Name on card:

Signature:

Please send me information on leaving a gift in my will

I intend on leaving a gift to the QEI Foundation in my will

Please send me information on joining 'SightFund', QEI's monthly giving program

Please send me information on joining QEI's Workplace Giving Program for immediate pre-tax donations via payroll

**Thank you! Your gift of \$2 or more is tax deductible. Please complete this form and return it in the reply paid envelope. Please help us keep our records up to date by making any changes below:**

Phone: .....  Mobile: .....  Email: .....

I would prefer to receive all future updates and campaigns from the QEI Foundation via email

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