

# EYECURE.

NEWS FROM THE QUEENSLAND EYE INSTITUTE FOUNDATION  
ISSUE 13 | SEPTEMBER 2020

## WELCOME

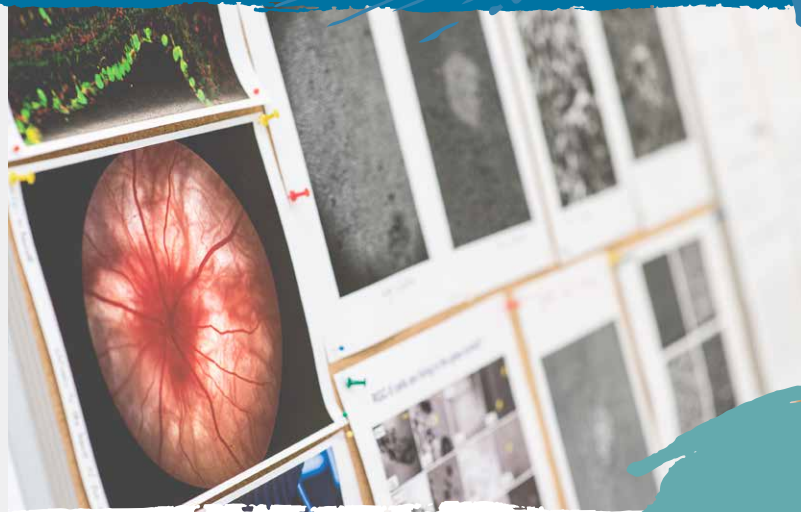
Welcome to the latest edition of Eyecure, the newsletter of the Queensland Eye Institute Foundation.

In this issue, we feature the story of Adrian Brown, long time patient of the QEI Clinic. We're also excited to share a new research project collaboration between QEI and the Queensland Children's Hospital, which will focus on mapping inherited eye diseases.

As we adapt to a new way of life, adhering to COVID-19 restrictions, we'd like to take this chance to update our supporters on how QEI is taking precautionary steps to prevent the spread of the pandemic now and in the future.

As always, thank you for your support.

Mark Radford, CEO.



## NEW RESEARCH COLLABORATION

An exciting new research collaboration with QEI Clinic's Associate Professor Abhishek Sharma and visiting ophthalmologists from the Queensland Children's Hospital is set to take place at QEI.

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## 55 YEARS OF THE QEI FOUNDATION

In April, we celebrated 55 years since the QEI Foundation (formerly Prevent Blindness Foundation) was founded!

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Members of the original  
Foundation Board

## COVID-19 UPDATE

It's safe to say a lot has happened in the world since we launched the last edition of Eyecure in March. The effects of COVID-19 have been devastating for many in our community. At QEI and our partner organisation, the South Bank Day Hospital (SBDH), we have been taking steps to avoid the spread of COVID-19. The health, wellbeing and safety of our patients, staff and visitors is of the utmost priority to us.

This is why we have been conducting temperature testing, utilising face masks, practicing social distancing and extra sanitising measures in our South Brisbane and Clayfield facilities. Patients may have also noticed that we now have protective screens up on the reception counters of the QEI Clinic. For the foreseeable

future, we will continue to test temperatures and record the details of all visitors to the building. We appreciate your cooperation at this time and encourage patients to contact us directly on (07) 3239 5000 should any concerns arise.

Even with the cancellation of our usual End of Financial Year Tax Appeal, we have been fortunate to have continued support shown towards the QEI Foundation. Thank you to those who have donated and supported us via social media, keeping our mission to save sight alive. Whilst the future is unclear, we know that together, we can get through this.



## CELEBRATING 55 YEARS OF QEIF

In April, we celebrated 55 years since the QEI Foundation was founded! Formerly known as the Prevent Blindness Foundation, many things have changed over the years! However, our mission to save sight continues to this day.

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 restrictions, we were unable to host an event in celebration of this milestone. However, this provided a great opportunity to look back over the years of

fantastic charity and awareness initiatives, held in support of our sight saving research. From National Sunnies Day, Bunnings sausage sizzles, movie fundraisers and fun runs to the 2019 Last Seen Exhibition to Save Sight! Of course, this is all made possible thanks to our dedicated supporters, staff and volunteers. We cannot wait for the day where we are able to welcome you all to another fantastic event!




## AUSTRALIAN MACULAR DISEASE RESEARCH REVIEW LAUNCHED BY ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR ANTHONY KWAN

We would like to congratulate QEI Clinic's Associate Professor Anthony Kwan on launching the very first issue of the Australian Macular Disease Research Review! The review is a unique Australian publication and brings together important research from around the world. Designed for ophthalmologists, optometrists and those interested in macular diseases, each issue will summarise the most significant new papers on macular disease research with commentary on how they can potentially affect practice.

"With busy clinical practices, eye health professionals may not have enough time to keep up to date with all the latest research and publications. The idea of the review is to present monthly



 Associate Professor Anthony Kwan

highlights and snippets of the latest macular and retinal research in an easily digestible format for its readers, who may then look into articles which are of interest to them in more detail later." says Associate Professor Kwan.

As QEI Clinic's Retina and Macula Specialist, Associate Professor Kwan has extensive experience in macular research. He has

been published in a number of national and international clinical ophthalmology and scientific journals. Issued monthly, it is hoped that this new research review will play an important role in communicating the latest discoveries and advancements in macular disease treatment and prevention.



## LAST SEEN EXHIBITION WINS WEBBY AWARD FOR VOICE SKILL

In May, the voice skill designed to accompany paintings in QEIF's Last Seen Exhibition to Save Sight won a Webby Award! The Webby Awards, deemed "The Oscar's of the Internet" are presented annually by The International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences, a judging body composed of over two thousand industry experts. The Last Seen voice skill, conceived and developed by Southern Cross Austereo, Alkira and Publicis Worldwide worked as an audio guide through the exhibition, speaking to the stories behind the artworks and providing soundscapes that added to the overall sensory experience of Last Seen.

To hear the voice skill in action, users just need to say "OK Google, talk to Last Seen Exhibition" on any Google Assistant enabled device.

## SEEING THE LIGHT IN A DARK DIAGNOSIS

Adrian Brown distinctly remembers the first signs of his vision loss when he was just 17 years old. Sat around a campfire with a group of peers, Adrian realised that he could not see the facial expressions of those sitting nearby. At the time, he had no idea of his condition and the journey that lay ahead of him.

Years of continued vision loss eventually led to the diagnosis of Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP) when Adrian was 35 years old. A referral to Professor Lawrence Hirst in 1995 marked the beginning of Adrian's long relationship with the QEI Clinic, where he is still a current patient of Associate Professor Anthony Kwan.

Despite being legally blind with just 5% remaining vision, Adrian maintains that a positive attitude is the most important thing when dealing with vision loss. "You can control it or let it control you... It's important to make the best of the situation."

Throughout his diagnosis and the progression of his condition, Adrian never let his visual impairment define or restrict him in any way. In his globetrotting career in pathology science, Adrian worked in laboratories across London, Saudi Arabia and Thursday Island.

A background in science, change management and information technology means that Adrian knows all too well of the importance of collaboration, education and research. At one point, years ago, he used to volunteer as a participant at QEI's Grand Rounds education evenings for ophthalmology trainees.

Adrian's three children are now all grown up and continue to visit Associate Professor Kwan for regular check-ups. Thankfully, none of them have exhibited signs or symptoms of RP to date. However, Adrian's sister and one of his twin nieces have both inherited RP. The most important advice Adrian can offer to those who are facing a recent diagnosis of an eye disease is; "Don't be afraid to seek support."

Like many people with RP, Adrian's vision loss is progressive and he is expected to have no remaining vision by the time he turns 70. For his 60th birthday, Adrian and his wife Flavia visited Norway to experience the Northern Lights, something Adrian wanted to witness before losing his sight completely.

There is currently no known cure for RP, however regular check-ups are crucial for monitoring the condition. "I think something that people with RP are too often told is that there's nothing that can be done." says Adrian on why so many people with RP neglect to seek alternative treatment options.

An up and coming research project with QEI Clinic's Associate Professor Abhishek Sharma aims to look at inherited eye disease and possible treatments. One of the first steps is to create a database that will connect patients with inherited eye diseases, such as RP, with the latest clinical trials and advancements in treatment options. You can read more about this on the next page.



 Adrian and Flavia in Copenhagen



 The Northern Lights, captured by Adrian, sailing out of Tromsø

## CREATING QUEENSLAND'S FIRST INHERITED EYE DISEASE REGISTRY

We are excited to announce a collaboration between QEI and the Queensland Children's Hospital, which will establish the very first inherited eye disease registry in Queensland!

The research project will see QEI Clinic's Associate Professor Abhishek Sharma work alongside Associate Professor Shuan Dai and Dr Jaclyn White from the Queensland Children's Hospital, who will both play an integral role in the creation of the registry.

Beginning with a focus on those with retinal dystrophies, the registry will eventually have compiled data on all inherited eye diseases in Queensland. It is hoped that this registry will play a large role in connecting patients to relevant clinical trials to optimise treatment options for those living with inherited eye disease in Queensland.

We would like to introduce you to Associate Professor Shuan Dai who is an experienced Paediatric Ophthalmologist and Strabismus Surgeon and the current Director of Ophthalmology at the Queensland Children's Hospital. As a keen educator and researcher, Associate Professor Dai has published more than 50 peer-reviewed papers in areas including adult and paediatric strabismus surgery, paediatric cataract surgery and children with visual impairment.

Also collaborating on the registry is Dr Jaclyn White who has subspecialised in Paediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus at the Queensland Children's Hospital. A strong interest in genetic eye disease lead Dr White to undertake further tertiary studies in Diagnostic Genomics. Her clinical research in ocular genetics has been presented at both national and international meetings.

Many readers would recognize Associate Professor Abhishek Sharma as QEI Clinic's medical and surgical retinal specialist. His particular specialties include retinal surgery for macular holes, epiretinal membranes and retinal detachments, as well as in treatment for macular degeneration and severe diabetes. Several of Associate Professor Sharma's patients suffer from

a variety of genetic eye diseases. This is what prompted him to get involved in the inherited eye disease registry.

Similar inherited eye disease registries already exist in Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia.


"This is an exciting project for Queenslanders because we will finally have a central registry for all children and adults with inherited eye diseases. As new treatments and clinical trials become available, such as gene therapies or medications, we can contact families in the registry and keep them involved. Knowing how many patients might benefit in our state will also allow us to provide more of the latest treatments and trials in Queensland, so patients and families may not always have to travel interstate." says Associate Professor Sharma.

If you think you may be eligible to join the inherited eye disease registry, please contact us at [info@qei.org.au](mailto:info@qei.org.au)







 Some of our Glaucoma Day special guests and speakers

## GLAUCOMA DAY SUCCESS!

In March, QEIF hosted a free Glaucoma Day information session and morning tea in support of World Glaucoma Week. The information session aimed at keeping patients and carers up to date with the latest in glaucoma research, clinical care and support groups available. We were fortunate to have secured a stellar lineup of speakers, including:

- QEIF CEO, Professor Mark Radford
- QEI Clinic's Dr Brendan Cronin
- QEIF Community Relations Manager, Jane Dodds

- Melissa Eckersley, Mother of young QEI glaucoma patient Oscar Eckersley
- Glaucoma Australia CEO, Annie Gibbins
- Head of QIMR's Statistical Genetics Group, Associate Professor Stuart MacGregor
- Quantum State Manager, Peter Cracknell

Special thanks to our speakers, attendees and Glaucoma Australia for their support in organising this event!

## 'INSIGHTFUL' ONLINE Q&A SERIES LAUNCHED BY QEI

Those who keep up to date with us on social media may have noticed that we have recently launched a Q&A style webinar series on our Facebook page. The Insightful Series aims to answer your questions about different ophthalmic topics, giving audiences the option to anonymously submit questions virtually, to be answered by different industry experts from QEI!

If you haven't already, visit our Facebook page and check out the series so far! Be sure to follow us for regular updates.

 QEI Clinical Trials Coordinator, Bojana Djokovic



## 5 MINUTES WITH PROFESSOR RAVI THOMAS

QEI Clinic's Professor Ravi Thomas is the son of two ophthalmologists, often sitting in on eye surgeries from a young age. We had the chance to ask Professor Thomas some questions about his career and highlights so far.

### What interested you in ophthalmology?

My parents were both ophthalmologists – some of the first qualified in India in the late 1940's. Rather than going to a big city, they elected to work in a small village in central India. There was not much to do in that village, so I spent my holidays from boarding school located in the mountains (Himalayas) at the clinic. I often sat in when Dad and Mom saw patients. Watched my first eye surgery at eight years of age, I think. I did medicine to do ophthalmology. I must say that I wavered twice during my MBBS course: I found forensics very interesting as well as the decision making process in obstetrics, but ophthalmology remained. I took up glaucoma and paediatric ophthalmology as I had really good teachers in both those areas during my MD Ophthalmology in Delhi. Incidentally my mother assisted me with my first cataract surgery and my first glaucoma surgery.

### What has been your career highlight to date?

Some of my career highlights include:

- Being appointed Head of Department of Ophthalmology at the Christian Medical College, Vellore, Tamil Nadu, India

- Working as Director LV Prasad Eye Institute, Hyderabad, India
- Being selected as member of the Glaucoma Research Society
- Being invited to deliver the Fred Hollows oration at a RANZCO meeting in Hobart
- Being invited to deliver the Gillies lecture for the Australia New Zealand Glaucoma Interest group during the World Glaucoma Congress in Melbourne in 2019
- Publishing the first population based study on the prevalence of glaucoma in South India
- Publishing the first papers on the progression of Primary Angle Closure Suspects and the progression of Primary Angle Closure

### What research areas are you interested in?

Glaucoma mainly: I have done most of this work in Primary Angle Closure Disease. I like Clinical Epidemiology. I prefer Bayesian Statistics over conventional statistics in publications.

### What do you like to do in your free time?

I used to practice martial arts and still do a bit of it – I'm not in full training though. I also like to spend time with the family, work on publications, play the harmonica, read and watch movies – Bollywood like Hollywood has a lot to offer.



Professor Thomas regularly visits India as part of a teaching program on glaucoma



# THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING QEIF THROUGH MELISSA'S BIRTHDAY FUNDRAISER


We are extending a huge thank you to QEIF supporter Melissa Eckersley who recently raised over \$4,000 for our sight saving research. Melissa decided that for her birthday this year, instead of gifts, she would ask for donations to be made to QEIF's research into eye diseases.

"My birthday wish is for Oscar and others like him to have a

future blessed with sight." says Melissa, whose son Oscar has been a patient of the QEI Clinic from an early age due to his congenital glaucoma.

Thank you to those who donated through the online fundraiser page! To create your own online fundraiser, visit [mycause.com.au](http://mycause.com.au) and search for "Queensland Eye Institute Foundation".



 Melissa and Oscar before one of his surgeries



**Your donation is gratefully appreciated. Help us save money by donating online. Visit [qei.org.au](http://qei.org.au) or call 07 3239 5050.**

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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