



Media Release

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Guide Dogs NSW/ACT initiative boosts support for Prince of Wales Hospital's Eye Clinic

With the generous financial support of its benefactor, Guide Dogs NSW/ACT, the Centre for Eye Health at University of New South Wales has presented a suite of general and advanced equipment to the Eye Clinic at the Prince of Wales Hospital - as part of a partnership agreement between Guide Dogs NSW/ACT, the Centre for Eye Health and South Eastern Sydney Local Health District (SESLHD) for Prince of Wales Hospital.

Valued at \$300,000, the resources include sophisticated non-invasive diagnostic instruments, as well as lasers for diagnosis and treatment of conditions such as diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma and macular degeneration.

As part of the partnership agreement, SESLHD has appointed consultant ophthalmologists to provide services to the Centre for Eye Health, providing ongoing specialist ophthalmic care as required.

In Australia, it is estimated that at least one in four people are at risk of developing an eye disease, and many of these patients remain undiagnosed.

With over 75% of vision loss being preventable or treatable, Guide Dogs NSW/ACT is focusing efforts on avoiding preventable vision loss.

President of Guide Dogs NSW/ACT, Mr Barry Stephen said that his Board was proud to be involved in helping people at the beginning of their battle with eye disease.

"Our hope is that by improving access to sophisticated ophthalmic equipment both at Prince of Wales Hospital and at the Centre for Eye Health, people will be in a better position to obtain timely and efficient treatment to avoid losing sight where possible," Mr Stephen said.

For over a hundred years, Prince of Wales Hospital's Eye Clinic with origins at Prince Henry Hospital, has been providing excellence in ophthalmic care to patients from local communities, throughout NSW and, on occasion, from across Australia.

The Prince of Wales Hospital Eye Clinic was the home base for the late Professor Fred Hollows AO and has also provided outreach programs across Australia, particularly to Indigenous and remote communities and internationally.

Chief Executive, South Eastern Sydney Local Health District Terry Clout said the contribution from Guide Dogs NSW/ACT and the Centre for Eye Health is testament of its commitment in assisting the Hospital's provision of patient care and research into eye disease.

"Establishing this partnership with the community sector and teaching institutions as the University of New South Wales - with which South Eastern Sydney Local Health District has a long and established relationship – is significant for our patients and our staff.

"Eye disease is often a manifestation of systemic disease and the location of the Eye Clinic at Prince of Wales Hospital with access to the on-site facilities of the Randwick Hospitals Campus and neighbouring University of New South Wales is ideal," Mr Clout said.

"The partnership and contributions by Guide Dogs NSW/ACT and Centre for Eye Health to Prince of Wales Hospital's Eye Clinic, under the leadership of Professor Minas Coroneo, Director of Eye Clinic, Prince of Wales Hospital, will help facilitate the timely management of patients who are diagnosed with conditions that require specialist medical attention.

"In addition to improving patient care, this equipment is also essential to teaching and will also enhance teaching of optometrists, medical students and registrars at Prince of Wales Hospital's Eye Clinic," Mr Clout said.

Professor Michael Kalloniatis, inaugural Centre Director, Centre for Eye Health is passionate about the opportunity this partnership represents.

"When it comes to saving sight, early detection and timely treatment go hand in hand.

"The Centre for Eye Health was launched in 2009 to improve early detection. Today's presentation of equipment and technology will go a long way in assisting the Hospital's Eye Clinic to effectively and efficiently treat patients," Professor Kalloniatis said.

State Member for Coogee, Mr Bruce Notley-Smith MP, praised the unique partnership between the locally-based not-for-profit organisation – Guide Dogs NSW/ACT, the University of New South Wales and Prince of Wales Hospital – part of the South Eastern Sydney Local Health District.

"Investing in these unique initiatives shows that they are truly leading the way in finding clever solutions to overcome public health challenges.

"I look forward to learning of the outcomes and benefits this partnership of locally-based organisations will bring to our community," Mr Notley-Smith said.

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT has been helping people for more than 50 years. Funded entirely by public donations, and best known for the legendary Guide Dogs that help blind and vision impaired people to maintain their independence, the organisation also offers a range of other services and mobility aids for people regardless of their level of vision loss.

Responding to community need for more accessible early detection services, and acknowledging its importance in saving sight, Guide Dogs NSW/ACT partnered with the University of New South Wales in 2009 to launch the Centre for Eye Health.

Located on the university campus at Kensington, the Centre for Eye Health provides free advanced assessments for at-risk patients who are referred by optometrists and ophthalmologists. With over 10,000 referrals so far, the Centre for Eye Health boasts state-of-the-art technology, 20 consulting rooms and a team of almost 30 clinical and operational staff.

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