



the royal victorian  
eye and ear  
hospital

# Sight + Sound

NEWS | WINTER 2019



*Mackenzie with her Mum and Dad at the Eye and Ear*

## From the bottom of her ear

In 2015 Tamara Donnelly experienced the best day of her life, the birth of her first child, Mackenzie Jane. All too quickly this beautiful moment would be disrupted by confusion and anxiety, as her little girl failed her first newborn hearing test, then her second.

Sent home to wait for information Tamara couldn't help but notice that her baby didn't respond to slamming doors or her dad, Chris, speaking loudly.

A few anxious days passed then Tamara received a letter. In print it simply stated that additional testing had confirmed that baby Mackenzie was profoundly deaf on both sides.

"I was so in love with her," says Tamara, "but where to from here?" She searched for as much information as she could on Google.

It wasn't until speaking with a family friend whose son was born deaf and was thriving with cochlear implants that Tamara felt she could connect the dots.

Proactively, she got her local GP to refer her to Dr Benjamin Weir, who then referred her to the Eye and Ear Cochlear Implant Clinic. The experience at the clinic was far removed from that first confronting letter. "Everyone was so nice and reassuring and really thorough in telling us what was going on," says Tamara.

It was at the Cochlear Implant Clinic that little Mackenzie began her journey towards receiving the gift of hearing. It was also here that Tamara

began documenting the process so other parents could find a human face for what they were going through. The "From the bottom of my ear" Facebook page details Mackenzie's appointments, check-ups and procedures.

"It started for family and friends, just to keep them informed," says Tamara. "Then I thought if I could help just one person who'd gone through what I'd been through, then that would be great."

Mackenzie was approved for her first implant at just over a year old in 2016. She received her second in 2018. Her recovery has been an overwhelming success.

Mackenzie is now four and testing in speech therapy at levels similar to those of her peers. She is cheeky, energetic and confident. She has attends kinder at a mainstream school and is determined she will become "a baby doctor" one day (paediatrician).

Most recently, Mackenzie, Tamara and Chris visited the Gold Coast where Mackenzie thoroughly enjoyed her first swim in three years with her new waterproof cochlear covers.

As she continues to succeed the "From the bottom of my ear" purpose has also changed. Now it is an inspiring story of a little girl held back by nothing. As Tamara says: "Anything is possible for her. We just want to give her the best life we can, that's our aim."



## CEO message

Welcome to our Winter edition of Sight+Sound. As the cold weather sets in and we spend more time indoors, now is the perfect time to catch up with all that's been happening at the Eye and Ear.

On our front page we have the inspiring story of

Mackenzie, who is flourishing with her bilateral cochlear implants. We also have an update from our very successful Community Eye Forum and the launch of our Strengthening Hospitals' Response to Family Violence project.

We are keen to find out what you think of these stories and stories featured in previous editions. So please let us know your thoughts by filling in our Sight+Sound reader survey enclosed. This helps us bring a better newsletter to you every season.

This will be my last message to you here as I am stepping down from my role as CEO at the Eye and Ear after a wonderful four years. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time getting to know our patients and supporters and working with a fantastic team of dedicated, professional and caring individuals. Victoria should be very proud to house Australia's only stand-alone eye and ear specialist hospital.

Best wishes,

Mark Petty

## Every guide dog has his day

On April 24 we celebrated International Guide Dog Day. This is an opportunity to pay tribute to the dogs that do incredible work to support the independence of those living with vision impairment and loss.

The day is particularly important to us because we have a Memorandum of Understanding with Guide Dogs Victoria. This means we are fortunate to regularly play host to some furry friends and their handlers in our specialist clinics and at special events. They assist patients and carers by explaining the variety services on offer from Guide Dogs Victoria to assist those living with blindness or vision impairment to maintain their independence.

Laurie Kelly is a familiar face who is often on hand to explain exactly this to staff at our induction events. He and ambassador dogs Max and Cindy form a very popular part of getting to know the Eye and Ear for new recruits. It is with his explanation that the many tools and opportunities on offer from organisations like Guide Dogs Victoria to support patients become clearer.



Laurie and Max at the Eye and Ear

## Thank you to the Collier Charitable Fund \$100M of support

In 2018 the Collier Charitable Fund who has provided wonderful support to the Eye and Ear over 32 years reached an incredible milestone. The distribution of their charitable grants exceeded \$100 Million.

The Collier sisters, Alice, Annette and Edith had set out the terms of the trust in their Wills many years ago and in their Wills they made provision for public hospitals, public education, the advancement of religion and general charitable purposes where there is need.

The Collier Charitable Fund have been very generous to the Eye and Ear over the years supporting vital equipment such as the Ellex Eye Cubed's B-scanner which is used for our ocular oncology patients, the MAIA, a new diagnostic microperimetry instrument, which assesses the function of the macula. For over 2 years Collier Charitable Fund supported our GP education and Emergency Physician Training courses.

The Eye and Ear which has been supporting the Victorian community for over 150 years congratulates the amazing work of the Fund over the last 65 years.



*GENEYE training*

## GENEYE training

In May a unique three day virtual reality training program was run using the latest technology for practical training together with techniques to improve their mental and physical wellbeing.

Dr Jacqueline Beltz, ophthalmologist at the Eye and Ear and Director of Training for The Victorian Branch of The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmology, says that the unique combination of virtual reality and co-operative training benefits experienced surgeons as well as trainees in GENEYE, as all surgeons require active and ongoing training.

“Just like pilots need to regularly upskill in the areas of disaster management, surgeons need to upskill in the management of unexpected events that might occur during surgery.”

“A good surgeon might walk out of the operating theatre thinking that they have done a good job, but a great surgeon walks out wondering how they can do better next time.” Dr Beltz said.

## Community Eye Forum

In May we held our Community Board Meeting which also served as a “Community Eye Forum” as it incorporated a forum focusing on Glaucoma.

Professor Keith Martin, Managing Director of the Centre for Eye Research Australia and Dr George Kong from the Eye and Ear’s Glaucoma Unit presented to an audience of over 100 patients, donors and supporters, community members, Board, Executive and staff across all disciplines.



*Minister Jenny Mikakos at the launch event*

## Hon. Jenny Mikakos visits for launch of Ocular Genetics Clinic

In May the Honourable Jenny Mikakos, Minister of Health marked the opening of a new clinic for genetic eye conditions, a partnership between The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital and The Royal Melbourne Hospital.

Chief Executive Officer Mark Petty said the Ocular Genetics clinic provides a ‘one-stop-shop’ for patients who have an inherited eye condition or are at risk of inheriting or passing on an eye condition.

The clinic provides world class diagnostics, genetic testing, advice and treatment from ophthalmologists, clinical geneticists, orthoptists and genetic counsellors.

Ophthalmologist, Dr Jon Ruddle says genetic therapy offers hope for patients with inherited conditions.



*The panel at the Community Eye Forum*

Both discussed the latest development in research and clinical trials for Glaucoma and patients present were encouraged to self-identify in clinic appointments if they were interested in taking part in future trials.

## Everyone has the right to feel safe

Family violence is a serious problem in Australia. More than one woman is killed per week in our country by a current or former partner. If this were a disease we would declare it to be an epidemic.

It affects all kinds of relationships and has a direct impact on the health and health-seeking behaviour of those affected.

That's why we have joined the Strengthening Hospitals' Response to Family Violence campaign. The campaign has two main aims – improve the hospital's response to staff experiencing family violence, and support and train staff to identify family violence in patient populations and provide appropriate support.

The project was officially launched in May with a staff and community forum and a comprehensive program delivered in partnership with the Royal Women's Hospital. This training will continue throughout 2019.

For many people, a visit to a health professional is the first, and sometimes only, step enabling them to access support and care.

By joining this campaign, we join a number of other hospitals in Victoria committed to working towards a society free from family violence. We are proud to be in their company.



SHRFV poster campaign

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Georgia Dickson at the main hospital

## Volunteer Profile

At just 19 Georgia Dickson is one of our youngest volunteers. She can usually be found on a Thursday assisting both staff and patients in Day Surgery. She will greet new arrivals, assist with paperwork, or direct families and carers to waiting areas. The tasks may be the same, but every day is different.

Luckily Georgia is well-equipped for the challenge – a seasoned volunteer who is bright and determined, she is as unflappable as she is humble. “Everyone here is really amazing,” she says. “They’re all so willing to step up and give people a hand.”

Stepping up is something Georgia understands, as she hopes to serve her country in the Royal Australian Air Force. Currently studying air traffic control, she dreams of transferring to become a pilot. An avid reader, Georgia also hopes to write and publish a novel.

Georgia is conscious that both these dreams rely on her ability to maintain her sight, so she is careful to take steps to protect her vision each day. She wears sunglasses and turns off the blue-light on her phone screen.

Georgia encourages any new patients to reach out when they visit the Eye and Ear: “Feel free to talk to staff. They’re always willing to help if you ask for it.”

Interested in finding out more about volunteering or joining our consumer register? Please contact Betty Tellis on 03 9929 8658 or [Betty.Tellis@eyeandear.org.au](mailto:Betty.Tellis@eyeandear.org.au).

# Survey

We want to be more aware of what matters to you.

We appreciate you taking the time to tell us your thoughts. Please use the enclosed reply paid envelope to send your responses back to us.

## 1. What interests you about Sight+Sound?

Please select more than one answer if applicable

- Patient stories
- New Eye and Ear services
- Information about particular conditions
- Eye and Ear achievements and staff awards
- Research news
- Redevelopment updates

## 2. How often should Sight+Sound be published?

- Quarterly
- Monthly
- Twice a year

## 3. Where did you get your copy?

- By mail
- In the hospital
- It was given to me
- Other (please specify)



## 4. How satisfied are you with the content in Sight+Sound?

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

## 5. What topics would you like to see more of?

- Patient stories
- New Eye and Ear services
- Information about particular conditions
- Eye and Ear achievements and staff awards
- Research news
- Redevelopment updates

## 6. Do you find Sight+Sound easy to read?

- Yes
- No (please specify why)



## 7. What do you think of the Sight+Sound layout?

- It's clear and pleasant
- It's too colourful
- It's dull and boring
- It's difficult to read
- It's suitable

## 8. Do you have any suggestions to improve the publication?

Please specify.





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