Saving sight: 30 years of the Lions Eye Institute 1983-2013
Chapter 1: A crusade against darkness

“I appeal to you Lions … will you not constitute yourselves Knights of the Blind in this crusade against darkness?” Helen Keller addressing the 1925 Lions International Convention, Cedar Point, Ohio, 1925.

The story of the Lions Eye Institute is one of a community of people with a common dream and purpose – to eradicate preventable blindness.

The genesis of that dream can be found in the words of the famous humanitarian and disability advocate Helen Keller.

Lions International was still a relatively young community and service organisation in 1925 when Helen Keller – left deaf and blind from a childhood illness – was invited to address its annual conference in Cedar Point, Ohio.

Her petition for Lions to become Knights of the Blind – “to hasten the day when there shall be no preventable blindness” – was taken up by Lions Clubs all over the world.

In Western Australia, one of the early members of the City of Perth Lions Club was Dr Robert Linton – widely regarded as the father of modern ophthalmology in Western Australia.
Born in Melbourne, Dr Linton was the son of well-to-do businessman Sir Richard Linton and Lady Ethel (Betty) Linton. Sir Richard was a member of the Victorian Parliament in the 1920s and early 1930s and was appointed Victoria’s Agent-General to London in 1933.

Dr Linton trained in medicine at Edinburgh University, where he met and married his wife – Perth-born Betty Dickson Halbert.
He graduated in 1938, served with the Royal Australian Air Force 2/4th Field Ambulance during World War II and, after the war, trained in ophthalmology at the Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital.

He came to Perth in 1948, went into private practice and was appointed to the Honorary staff at Royal Perth Hospital, where he served for 28 years.

Dr Linton began performing corneal transplants in Perth in 1950 after training in the United States at the suggestion of Dr Ida Mann – the distinguished English ophthalmologist and Oxford University’s first female Professor.

Dr Mann had moved to Western Australia after World War II and diagnosed a trachoma epidemic among the Kimberley’s Aboriginal communities. Both she and Dr Linton saw a great need in the vast State of Western Australia for targeted health services to reduce the impact of eye disease.
In 1963, Dr Linton became national president of the Ophthalmological Society of Australia – later to become the Royal Australian College of Ophthalmology (RACO) and now the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmology (RANZCO) – and in the same year, organised the first national congress to be held in Perth.

At this congress he helped establish the Western Australian division of the Australian Foundation for the Prevention of Blindness (AFPB).

The AFPB had been established in Adelaide with David Tonkin – an ophthalmologist who later became Premier of South Australia – becoming its first executive director in 1962. Dr Tonkin was also the driving force behind Australia’s first screening programs for glaucoma in that State.

In his Presidential Address to the Ophthalmological Society, Dr Linton described the goals of the new Foundation as educating the wider community about eye health, workplace safety, glaucoma education, the impact of genetics on eye health and the importance of regular eye checks. He said it was a job that the medical profession could not take on alone.

Dr Linton likened the Foundation to a ship: “Ships are useless without crews. We, the ophthalmologists, can supply only part of the crew. We know where we want to go, but, not possessing the navigating skill, we look to the national organisations to help us on our voyage and bring us safely into port. One such organisation is Lions International, which has always associated itself with this cause in America (where it was founded) and in most other countries outside the iron curtain to which the movement has spread, one such country being Australia. With the help that it has promised and with what others may give (such as £1250 from the members of the Western Australian Branch of this Society), I feel that the Foundation will surely achieve the objects for which it was founded.”
Dr Robert Linton was successful in seeking funding support for the AFPB from the Government of the day.
In the months ahead, Dr Linton began the task of informing government and the wider community about the objectives of the AFPB. He believed through public education, preventable blindness could be reduced in the Western Australian community by 50 per cent.

In May 1964, he wrote to then Premier David Brand requesting funding to support the work of the Foundation and received a £250 annual grant.

In the same year, the AFPB began community glaucoma screenings of Western Australians out of a customised mobile caravan.

The screening process was embraced by the community and very effective with thousands of Western Australians lining up for free tests. The caravan was manned by a voluntary workforce of ophthalmologists, nurses and Lions members and travelled all over the State offering free eye screenings. The first, set up outside Council House, attracted hundreds of people.

Over the next few years, the program became the largest district project of the local Lions movement and there was a growing recognition that a more formal approach was needed to its operation. At the Lions convention in Albany in 1970, the Lions Save-Sight Foundation (LSSF) was formed, with Lions District Governor Dr Jack Hoffman appointed inaugural chair.

The LSSF greatly expanded the screening programs already begun by Dr Linton and added screenings for amblyopia (lazy eye) in children from 1973, and diabetic retinopathy among the population with diabetes mellitus from 1978.

With a landmass of more than 2.25 million square kilometres, providing eye screening services to Western Australia was
The screening caravan outside Council House in Perth attracted long queues of people.

Dr Jack Hoffman

a huge undertaking and at its peak the screenings were offered out of 69 regional locations.

Over its lifetime, the screening program measured the intraocular pressure of an estimated 300,000 Western Australians and saved the eyesight of many people. It had also done much to raise public awareness of eye disease and preventable blindness.

A research study published in 2006, *Trends in Blindness Over 19 Years in Western Australia*, found blindness from glaucoma falling 75 per cent.

The study found the decrease was due to the availability of better medical and surgical therapies, as well as earlier diagnosis and commencement of treatment.
Ian McAllister in an outback clinic looking for trachoma and teaching an interested bystander.

At the height of the LSSF program, eye screenings were offered at 69 locations.
It also noted: “The Lions Save-Sight mass population screening of over 40-year-olds … was associated with significant public education about glaucoma.”

Prior to the program, there was no cohesive approach to the screening of common blinding eye conditions in the State and many Western Australians went blind from common and treatable conditions like glaucoma.

Dr Linton’s contribution to the eye health of Western Australia was rewarded with the Lions’ highest award, Life Membership of Lions International, the Melville Jones Fellowship and Membership of the Order of Australia.

Internationally, the Lions expanded the program for diabetic retinopathy on a global scale.

The man who became the second Chairman of the Lions Save-Sight Foundation (and later the inaugural Chair of the Lions Eye Institute), Past District Governor of Lions Brian King AM MBE, said the success of the screening program was the catalyst for bigger things.

He paid tribute to the many Lions who supported the screening program and spent so much of their own time supporting it, in particular Past District Governors of Lions Tom Cameron OAM, Terry Price and Jack Hoffman.

“Tom was one of the early champions of the screening program and used to cart the caravan all over the State for screenings – usually on weekends – and Terry was a pharmacist who helped set up the screenings for amblyopia and diabetic retinopathy,” he said.

“So the Lions were really inspired by the success of the screening program, the ophthalmologists were inspired by it, the Lions
Save-Sight Foundation was coordinating it all and that’s about the time Bob Linton was corresponding with Ian Constable, a talented young Australian ophthalmologist working at Harvard Medical School,” he said.

“Bob told Ian what the Lions were doing over here. When Ian showed an interest in coming back from Harvard to Australia, the Lions met with The University of Western Australia (UWA) and the health authorities and discussed setting up the Lions Chair of Ophthalmology. It was the first time there had been a Chair, it was endowed in the name of Lions and we guaranteed that we would pay $15,000 a year for five years and then it grew from there.”

A number of key people were involved in the establishment of the Chair of Ophthalmology, among them Dr David McAuliffe, a busy and talented Goldfields-born ophthalmologist, and UWA’s then Professor of Surgery Bernard Catchpole.

Dr McAuliffe had been encouraged to approach Ian Constable by Dr Leo Shanahan OAM, a Canberra-based ophthalmologist.

Emeritus Professor Catchpole recalls those early discussions: “David McAuliffe came into my office one afternoon to say that there
was a very promising young Australian ophthalmologist working in Boston USA who should be persuaded to come to Perth,” he said.

“What would be an appropriate appointment and how funds to support him could be obtained were discussed.”

Shortly after, Professor Catchpole visited the United States and met Ian Constable with two other young Perth surgeons over dinner in Boston.

Further discussions occurred in Perth and the Faculty of Medicine was persuaded that a Chair of Ophthalmology was highly desirable and should be established.

“Next, the University’s Academic Board – the arbiter of such decisions – gave the appropriate endorsement to the project but pointed out that there was no money available from the University for it. The new Professor would have to be supported within the existing Department of Surgery,” Emeritus Professor Catchpole said.

“Subsequently, the State Department of Health and the Lions organisation reached a funding agreement. A new Professor of Ophthalmology, Professor Ian Constable, was appointed by the University and welcomed into the Faculty in 1975. Very soon afterwards, the new academic specialty began to flourish.”

The decision to create a Chair of Ophthalmology was a major development when it occurred because although UWA first opened its doors to students in 1913, the Faculty of Medicine was not founded until 1956 and there was no Professor of Ophthalmology among its 11 Foundation professors.

Prior to its establishment, any students who wanted to pursue ophthalmology as a speciality would have to travel interstate or overseas to pursue their training.
Brian King recalls Ian Constable saw the enormous potential for Western Australia as a research hub with its excellent health care system, stable population, long genetic lines from early settlers and proximity to Asia.

On his arrival in Western Australia, Professor Constable set up a number of research and teaching programs from Royal Perth Hospital (RPH).
One of the young ophthalmologists already working at RPH was Dr Richard Cooper. He was born in Burundi, studied in Kenya, but moved to Australia from England where he had studied medicine in London and ophthalmology in Cambridge.

He describes an ill-equipped and under-resourced ophthalmology department at RPH.

“As a senior registrar I started doing some work in glaucoma – with Ian Constable’s arrival the whole clinic was modernised, with new equipment brought in,” Dr Cooper said.

“He really introduced specialisation to the clinic at RPH, it was totally reorganised and properly equipped. Up until that time, for example, there had only been one slit lamp at Royal Perth.

“Over time, an entire purpose-designed and built eye ward was established in the South East extension and a laser was installed, in addition to a new ophthalmic operating microscope in the South-East Operating Theatre.”

Professor Constable recalls both he and Dr Cooper were busy from the outset and were very well supported by Dr McAuliffe, who was at St John of God Hospital, and Dr Linton, who had retired from RPH, but also by most of the ophthalmologists then working in the State.

Dr Cooper said Professor Constable’s impact on ophthalmology in Western Australia was huge because there had not been a strong focus on specialisation and previously, many patients had to travel to Sydney, Melbourne or Adelaide if they required treatment for more complex eye disease.

The second impact was on the reputation of Perth as a place to study. The clinic began to attract talented young post-graduate
David Beale, testing his invention – a radio telemetry device – which continually monitors intraocular pressure in the University Department of Ophthalmology laboratories, RPH, circa 1977-79

The first patient to undergo radio telemetry of intraocular pressure in the RPH clinic in 1982
students from Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, New Zealand and a number of Asian countries and many of them stayed in Perth following their training.

The third impact was a rapid escalation of laboratory-based research.

Professor Constable immediately gained National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) grants and recruited outstanding young post-doctoral research Fellows, notably Valerie Alder (nee Johnstone) and Frank van Bockxmeer to consolidate and expand key research areas.

By the early 1980s, ophthalmology had become the largest research consortium in UWA surgery.

The AFPB had been inactive since the early 1970s. Professor Constable revised its role to support new research initiatives by assigning part of his private medical practice income to it. Laurie Wilson – the successful car parking operator whose daughter was nearly blinded by childhood glaucoma – was appointed Chairman.
The LSSF also greatly expanded its support of research projects during this period.

Over the next few years, the University’s Department of Ophthalmology conducted its research work at RPH until 1983 when old operating theatres and wards were converted to clinical and research laboratories in the former Chest Hospital, now A Block of Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital at the Queen Elizabeth II (QEII) Medical Centre in Nedlands. Professor Constable and his team made the move to Perth’s western suburbs, although they were not the first to take up residence in A Block with Byron Kakulas’ neuromuscular group also maintaining research space there.
The support of the Charles Court Liberal Government was critical in ensuring the allocation of space at A Block, initially on a 15-year lease.

“Professor Constable tried to set up an eye institute at Royal Perth Hospital but he wasn’t offered a big enough area to set up laboratories and clinics,” Dr Cooper said.

“The QEII Board, prompted by Sir Charles Court, offered the space in A Block on a 15-year lease and he was able to create a laboratory and find space for research groups who had started at RPH.”

The move to QEII resulted in Royal Perth Hospital no longer paying some of the endowed positions which then required LSSF to seek a change in the funding arrangement with UWA.

As early as 1979, the LSSF recognised the resourcing of eye programs was beyond the capacity of a volunteer service group and planning began for the establishment of the Lions Eye Institute (LEI).

Brian King remembers these growing pains thus: “Ian Constable and I had a chat one day and I told him ‘Lions can’t keep up with this – we’ll have to broaden our base’. Ian said: ‘Let’s have a baby and create the Lions Eye Institute’. So we went to government, we went to the Lotteries Commission, business people and the like and began to work towards the establishment of the Lions Eye Institute.”

The 1981 annual report of the LSSF signalled the intention to create a stand-alone institute but it took further planning and careful financial management to take the next step.

The Lions Eye Institute was finally conceived as a totally independent body with a separate Board of Governors under the directorship of Professor Constable.
# CURRENT STAFF

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This document lists the original staff who transitioned from Royal Perth Hospital to A block at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital.

The 1981 annual report
The LSSF and Professor Constable, had very specific aims in mind for the LEI: the need to get more research units; government acceptance of the Institute’s role; a strong clinical service to ensure the LEI offered a tertiary referral centre for the major causes of blindness; maintenance of strong links with the state-wide community and Lions Clubs; links with – but independence from – The University of Western Australia; a strong independent board of community-minded people and a commitment to making WA a leader in ophthalmology in research and clinical services.

Professor Constable also had a clear vision of how the Institute should be structured and run.

Mr King said Professor Constable had seen medical institutes in the United States that provided a solid base of revenue through the provision of fee-paying clinical services, which helped support the research side.

“The real key to the LEI’s success is this model, which was unique in Australia at the time,” he said.

“We decided on a clinic of tertiary referral, offering a range of sub-specialists for eye diseases, supported by a very big traffic stream of fee-paying patients.

“We created a system where a percentage of an ophthalmologists’ patient fees go into research. That enabled us to create a much more solid base of revenue.

“The model continues to generate substantial revenue because you don’t generate profits out of research grants – if you get $100 you have to spend $100.”

The Institute was by now embedded in the Western Australian community and attracting widespread support from a range of
government, private and community organisations, including the TVW Channel 7 Telethon Foundation, Channel 9 Appealathon Foundation, Medical Research Fund of Western Australia and the National Health and Medical Research Council.

When the Governor-General Sir Ninian Stephen officially launched the Lions Eye Institute in 1988, the Board was already looking into the future and began to source funding for a new building.

In 1989, the Commonwealth Government pledged $3 million to a new building and in 1991, the LEI negotiated a 99-year lease with a peppercorn rent with the trustees of the QEII Medical/University Trust for a parcel of land at the corner of Verdun Street and Gairdner Drive on the hospital’s campus in Nedlands.

On May 26, 1992, then Governor of Western Australia Sir Francis Burt launched the LEI’s first public appeal to help finance the construction of new purpose-built research laboratories.

Sir James Cruthers was Chairman of the appeal and Ivan Hoffman his deputy. Their influence and connections to the business community was critical to the success of this venture. Sir James McCusker, Bill Wyllie and Sir James Cruthers all later served as Patrons of the LEI.

Sir James’ son, His Excellency Malcolm McCusker AC CVO QC, Governor of Western Australia, has continued strong ties and support of the LEI, even donating part of his Governor’s salary to the Institute.

Dr Cooper, who was by this stage Deputy Director of the LEI, recalls that rattling the tin at this time produced some surprising results.

“Coming from the UK, I had no idea who was who in Perth but from time to time, I ended up treating a millionaire,” he said.
“One day I had a patient called McCusker come in and I asked him if he would consider making a donation. I remember he said he’d be happy to discuss it with me. We ended up having a sandwich in Professor Constable’s office, at the end of which he stated that; ‘There’s no such thing as a free lunch so what do you need?’

“He was, of course, Sir James McCusker. He was a fantastic man and he ended up giving an extraordinary amount of money to the LEI.”

The second major donor at that time was Bill Wyllie AM. He had left school at 13 to earn money to support his family. At just 19 and after training as a flight mechanic, he went to Singapore to work for Wearne Brothers Limited. He spent decades in Asia and became a leading corporate figure known as “the smiling tiger”. He was also a successful racing car driver. Bill Wyllie retired back to Perth in 1992 and supported numerous charities, including the LEI.

With a number of big donations and a great deal of support from the wider Western Australian community, the money for construction was raised and the foundation stone was laid by then Governor-General Major Michael Jeffrey on April 27, 1994.

Other structural changes to the LEI’s operations were also occurring around this time.

On June 8, 1994, an agreement was signed – with the approval of the Vice-Chancellor and Senate of The University of Western Australia – to form the Centre for Ophthalmology and Visual Science (COVS) within the LEI.

The COVS was designed to have independent University status within the UWA’s Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry and allowed the LEI to attract substantial infrastructure funds from the Federal Government on the basis of teaching and research grants won in open competition.
WA Governor Sir Francis Burt with Justice Geoffrey Kennedy at the appeal launch in Winthrop Hall UWA

This plaque commemorates the official launch of the Lions Eye Institute by then Governor-General Sir Ninian Stephen in 1988
Crowds gather for the launch of the LEI laboratories building appeal at Winthrop Hall
The COVS is run by an advisory committee consisting of two university nominees of the Vice-Chancellor and the Head of the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry, two members of the Board of Governors of the LEI, the Director and Deputy Director.

The creation of COVS provided considerable incentive for research teams within the Institute to submit national and international grants through the Centre. Collaborative arrangements with other departments in the university, with international universities and projects also boosted activities within COVS.

On February 27, 1996, then Western Australia Premier Richard Court officially opened the LEI research facilities.

The new Institute building rapidly grew as the principal point of referral for complicated binding eye diseases requiring specialist diagnosis, laser treatment or microsurgery.

An expanding scientific base also allowed the Institute to pursue a broad range of research projects which covered all the major causes of blindness in the community and encompassed clinical, laboratory and preventative medicine.

At the time, Professor Constable described the Institute as a “model of independence, competitive self-support and flexibility”.

“At the same time, it has very positive interdependence with the supporting bodies, the Lions organisation generally and the public it seeks to serve,” he said.

“In addition to the conventional sources of support from charities and scientific bodies, we have managed also to attract industrial research and development grants, Government contract work and in the case of the development of intraocular lenses and excimer lasers, venture capital.”
The LEI building on the corner of Verdun Street and Gairdner Avenue

The Memorandum of Understanding signed between WAIMR, UWA, the LEI and the Minister for Health in November, 2005
The LEI building has served researchers, clinic staff and patients for many years but the opportunity arose with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding to partner with a new state-of-the-art medical research facility planned for the QEII Medical Centre campus with a scheduled completion date of December 2013.

In 2007, the Vice-Chancellor of UWA, Professor Alan Robson, and then Premier Alan Carpenter, committed $25 million each to consolidate medical research in Western Australia at the QEII campus.

Professor Robson, Professor Constable, Professor Peter Klinken of the WA Institute for Medical Research and Professor Fiona Stanley of the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research WA, formed a joint delegation to Canberra and succeeded in obtaining $100 million from the Federal Government of John Howard to build new research facilities.

Professor Constable had previously negotiated a 99-year lease not only on the LEI building site but also on a small adjoining parcel of land for future expansion.

It was then decided to trade that option for one floor in the new research building for the remaining 78 years of the lease.

This new phase in the LEI’s expansion has been largely overseen by Professor David Mackey – a worldwide authority on the genetics of eye disease – who assumed the role of Managing Director after Professor Constable stepped down in February 2009.

In 2011, the LEI launched only the second capital fundraising campaign in its history to help fund the fit-out of a new floor dedicated to eye research in the new building.

Campaign patrons WA Governor Malcolm McCusker QC and his wife Tonya, businessman Stan Perron and his wife Jean helped drive the
An architect’s impression of the new research building
Attending the launch of the capital fundraising campaign, pictured left to right, Professor Geoffrey Crawford, Professor Ian Constable, Professor Mariapia Degli-Esposti, Associate Professor Angus Turner, Tonya McCusker, His Excellency Malcolm McCusker, Governor of Western Australia, Associate Professor Fred Chen, Professor Ian McAllister and LEI Managing Director Professor David Mackey

LEI Managing Director Professor David Mackey tours the new building during the construction phase
campaign with major financial contributions coming from Lotterywest, Wesfarmers, the McCusker Charitable Foundation and Stan Perron Foundation, among others.

Professor Mackey said the research space and cutting-edge equipment planned for the facility would ensure the LEI continued to attract world-class researchers and clinicians to keep the Institute at the forefront of eye and medical research.

“The history of the LEI is of an institution that continues to innovate,” Professor Mackey said.

“While we are making significant progress in our mission to prevent blindness, we are still living in a world where rates of blindness from cataracts, infections, glaucoma, genetic eye disease and a myriad other conditions pose a major health challenge.

“The task of reducing the burden of eye disease is not going away and the LEI needs to continue growing in response to that challenge.”
In 1963, the annual meeting of the Ophthalmological Society of Australia was held in Perth under the magnanimous and professional care of Dr Robert (Bob) Linton, who was keen to prove we could make this a memorable occasion for those who travelled across the continent for the event.

Bob also wanted to use the publicity the congress created. He wanted to bring the public’s attention to the appalling statistics of loss of sight in the community due to undiagnosed amblyopia in the young, glaucoma in the elderly and a total disregard for eye safety in industry at the time.

These factors were discussed at the organising committee meetings and the decision was reached that we needed to go public with a body other than the ophthalmic society to make public statements about these problems. The decision was reached that we create the Australian Foundation for the Prevention of Blindness (AFPB).

The Board of this organisation was to have ophthalmologists coupled with other members of the community who had expertise in other aspects like advertising, printing and industry who could help get the message to the appropriate targets.

On one evening of the congress, all the attending Australian ophthalmologists and appropriate members of the public were invited to Winthrop Hall for the opening of the foundation.

Thereafter the public was made aware of our concern by news releases as well as glaucoma and amblyopia screenings and talking to people in industry.
Although we were starting to realise we had an uphill battle.

The best thing that happened from this humble beginning was to come shortly after when Bob Linton had a phone call from one of his regular patients who asked Bob to meet him and four of his friends in the saloon bar of the Adelphi Hotel at 5 o’clock to discuss what these men should be doing to honour the commitment they had made when they started the first local branch of an American club called Lions.

This club had made a pledge to the famous deaf-blind Helen Keller many years before. Bob was surprised by the request to meet these five men and thought it appropriate to take four ophthalmologists with him, so he invited the first four members of the AFPB he came across to give moral support.

Being the youngest ophthalmologist in the town and in the third year of practice I felt very honoured to be asked, and I believe at this stage I am the last man of that assembly still standing who witnessed the birth of
the very productive joint effort of Lions and ophthalmology in this State.

As I remember the Lions were Robert Levinson, Felix Levinson, “Swannie” Swanson, Tom Chapple and Dr Ernest Hodder – a GP who was a new arrival in the State but had been a member of Lions in Victoria.

The ophthalmologists with Bob were Chris Wilson (DC) and Tim Yates (PC) as well as myself. The conversation was very productive from the beginning.

Within weeks Bob found himself sworn in to the Lions Club of Perth and was an active member who enjoyed the fraternity and varied projects outside of medicine for the rest of his life. At the same time led the Perth Club to such valuable projects as the glaucoma caravan which was great for examining large numbers of patients anywhere in the State and putting the cause before the public.

This was only the beginning not only for the Perth Club as Lions grew and ophthalmologists became attached to other clubs, mine being Fremantle, John Rogers to Floreat.

More importantly, these wise Lions sent several members to sit on the Board of the AFPB and presented great wisdom and enthusiasm to the Foundation, causing increased activity and advancement towards our aims.

Tom Chapple remained the Chairman of the AFPB for many years. The Lions gave great impetus to the AFPB but after several months the Lions asked if they could produce their own committee involving all Lions Clubs that wished to be involved but still retain several ophthalmologists, believing the impetus towards our joint desires could advance faster and so the Lions Save-Sight Foundation (LSSF) was born with Dr Jack Hoffman as the inaugural chairman.
A lot of good was done with the Lions Clubs working with the doctors of a weekend and at night but the Lions members wanted more and had very early dreams of a Lions Eye Hospital near QEII.

Our relationship and work continued in this vein and nothing more was being contemplated.

Meanwhile, all Perth ophthalmologists were dissatisfied with the results of retinal detachment surgical results. Eventually, Dr David McAuliffe took matters in his own hands and went to America to learn more about the subject and soon realised he wasn’t going to gain much in the few weeks he had put aside for this cause. He was, however, grateful and impressed by this young Sydney doctor who had made retinal work his major focus in USA for some years.

David came back to Perth a sadder but wiser individual and at a meeting of ophthalmologists stated his frustration at the lack of time to learn more but extremely excited about his newly found compatriot Dr Ian Constable, who he realised could solve the posterior segment eye problems that were causing such angst to us.

David was like a dog with a bone and kept on about the wonders of this young man, til eventually Bob Linton in his typical direct manner said: “Well if he is this good we had better bring him out and let’s have a look at him.” And as the saying goes: “The rest is history.”

Dr Ray Whitford, Board Member, LEI, 1988-2002