



Media Statement

June 18, 2018

Lions Eye Bank welcomes global standards for the ethical use of eye tissue

The Lions Eye Bank of Western Australia has welcomed the first ever global agreement on the use of human tissue for ocular transplantation, medical research and future technologies.

Announced on June 15 in Barcelona, Spain, Lions Eye Bank WA Manager Lisa Buckland said the new agreement – to be known as the Barcelona Principles - would lift eye banking standards globally and encourage ethical practices.

Ms Buckland said the Eye Bank Association of Australia and New Zealand (EBAANZ) had developed a regional framework in 2015 that helped guide the global adaptation. She represented EBAANZ and Lions Eye Bank WA at the launch, held at the Centre de Barraquer Ophthalmology Centre and Barcelona Tissue Bank.

“It was an honour to attend the launch of the Barcelona Principles. Representing the Lions Eye Bank WA and EBAANZ and supporting this initiative was a joy,” she said.

“The new global agreement will build eye banking services and improve equitable access to the millions awaiting corneal surgery around the world.

“The Barcelona Principles also provide comment and helpful recommendations on areas of ethical ambiguity, such as profitisation and supply chains to for-profits, the movement of tissue around the world and partnering with others all over the world.”

The agreement’s key strategies include:

1. Respecting the autonomy of the donor and their next-of-kin in the consent process.

2. Protecting the integrity of the altruistic and voluntary donation and its utility as a public resource for the shared benefit of all.
3. Supporting sight restoration and ocular health for recipients.
4. Promoting fair, equitable and transparent allocation mechanisms.
5. Upholding the integrity of the custodian's profession in all jurisdictions.
6. Developing high-quality services that promote ethical CTO management, traceability and utility.
7. Developing local / national self-sufficient services.
8. Recognising and addressing the potential ethical, legal and clinical implications of cross-border activities.
9. Ensuring ethical practice and governance of research (non-therapeutic) requiring cells, tissue and/or organs.

Ms Buckland said Australia was extremely fortunate to have a world-class eye banking system which worked to ensure donor wishes were adhered to and treated ethically.

The Lions Eye Bank was established in 1986 by the Lions Eye Institute and the Lions Save-Sight Foundation and has completed almost 5000 procedures.

Last year was a record year for the Lions Eye Bank with a total of 250 corneal transplants. Technological improvements have meant donated tissue can be stored for up to a month with virtually no waiting times for surgery.

More information about the Barcelona Principles can be found at www.gaeba.org/publications

Media Contact: Francesca Robb – francescarobb@lei.org.au / 0409 102 556

Image: Lions Eye Bank WA Manager Lisa Buckland

Image: Eye following corneal graft