

vision News



Spring 2026



**Be part of
Australia's first
Medical Research
Giving Day**

Save the date:
9 September 2026

Meet Morland,
a Master Athletics
Champion who
hasn't let macular
degeneration slow
him down

From the Managing Director

I've always believed that medical research is fundamentally about hope. Hope for better treatments, earlier detection, and a future where blindness and vision loss are preventable rather than inevitable.



This belief has never been stronger than it is today, as I look at what the Lions Eye Institute is achieving across our research, our clinics, and our community outreach programs. And it's why this edition of Vision News resonates so deeply with me – timed with Australia's first Medical Research Giving Day.

On 9 September, the Lions Eye Institute joins more than 30 medical research institutes across Australia to highlight the importance of medical research and the difference it makes to people's lives. For us, it's an opportunity to shine a light on the vital role of sight-saving research, demonstrate why our work matters, and recognise donors like you who make that work possible.



From left to right: Sharon Webb (Manager of AAMRI WA), Professor Chandra Balaratnasingam, Dr Glen Power, Professor Steve Wesselingh (CEO of NHMRC) and Paula Rogers (Chair of the QEII Precinct) on a tour of the Institute

Research advocacy

Over the past year, we've had the privilege of advocating for patients and research funding and support at the highest levels.

Earlier this year, myself and **Professor Chandra Balaratnasingam**, Medical Director of the Lions Eye Institute hosted Professor Steve Wesselingh, CEO of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), and other leaders from Western Australian research institutes, on a tour of our facilities. It was a chance to showcase the quality of eye research happening right here in Perth – and to underscore why sustained funding for medical research benefits not just patients, but Australia's entire research sector.

We've also been actively advocating on behalf of patients requiring intravitreal injections – sight-saving treatments for retinal conditions like macular disease. As the Federal Government reviewed the reclassification of key Medicare Benefits Schedule items for these treatments, we joined patient groups and other eye care providers in ensuring the voice of Australian patients was heard in these important policy discussions.

This advocacy work isn't about recognition – it's about removing barriers and maintaining access to sight-saving treatments for everyone.

Cover photo courtesy of the City of Stirling and Morland Smith

Looking to the future

Our Institute is in an exciting phase of growth and renewal.

We have finalised a new strategic plan for 2026-2030, which will guide our direction for the next five years. This plan reflects input from our clinical staff, research teams, and the community we serve. It's grounded in a simple question: how do we ensure the Lions Eye Institute remains a global leader in vision research and eye care?

We're also developing a new Level 2 Theatre and Clinic space in our Nedlands facility. This \$16 million investment reflects our growth in clinical care and our commitment to delivering world-class eye care alongside groundbreaking research.

The power of translational research

At its heart, the Lions Eye Institute exists at the intersection of discovery and care. We don't just study eye disease in the laboratory. We translate those discoveries into treatments that reach real patients, in real clinics.

That translational approach is evident in our current clinical trials, including our age-related macular degeneration (AMD) studies. AMD is one of the leading causes of vision loss in older Australians. Our researchers are exploring new ways to slow its progression and preserve sight – work that will directly benefit thousands of people.

Our Institute has a long history of breakthroughs that started as laboratory discoveries and became clinical realities. This year, we celebrated one of those achievements when **Professor Graham Barrett AM**, a Consultant Emeritus at the Lions Eye Institute, was announced as the 2026 Ian Constable Lecturer – a recognition of his remarkable career in vision research and the impact of his work.

Recognising our talented team

This year, we've been honoured to see colleagues recognised for their contributions. **Professor Bill Morgan** was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) and **Professor Mariapia Degli-Esposti** was appointed Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in the 2026 King's Birthday Honours, reflecting years of dedication to advancing vision science.

We've also welcomed new clinicians to our team – **Dr Nishant Davidoss** and **Dr Chris Lim** bring fresh expertise and enthusiasm to our clinical services.



From left to right: Emeritus Professor Ian Constable AO, Professor Graham Barrett AM, guest speaker at the 2026 Ian Constable Lecture, and Dr Glen Power

Associate Professor Holly Chinnery was named a finalist for the Australian Museum Eureka Prize in the Innovative Use of Technology category alongside her long-standing collaborator Professor Laura Downie and team from the University of Melbourne. Using this imaging technique, the team has already changed decades-old thinking about the immune cell landscape in the eye, with their findings including the discovery of T lymphocytes dynamically patrolling the healthy human cornea.

On Wednesday 9 September 2026, the Lions Eye Institute joins more than 30 medical research institutes across Australia for the inaugural Medical Research Giving Day.

A day to highlight the vital role of medical research. A day to support the people behind the discoveries and breakthroughs changing lives. And a day for our community to help make the next discovery possible.

On Medical Research Giving Day, **your impact can go twice as far**, with donations matched dollar for dollar to help drive sight-saving research forward.



Donations matched by



Best wishes

Dr Glen Power
Managing Director
Lions Eye Institute

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Associate Professor Fred Chen with his patient, Eamon, who has usher syndrome



Medical Research Giving Day 2026

Be a hero. Support sight-saving research.

For more than 40 years, research has been at the heart of the Lions Eye Institute. It is how we deepen our understanding of eye disease, develop new treatments and move closer to preventing and curing blindness. From discoveries in the laboratory to advances that reach patients in the clinic, our world-class research is helping to change what is possible for people affected by vision loss.

So much of what we value in life is made possible by our sight. It connects us to the people we love, enables independence, and opens doors to opportunity. Yet millions of Australians live with sight loss that could be prevented or treated through research. At the Lions Eye Institute, we are committed to discovering treatments that protect sight, restore vision, and deliver hope.

You don't need a lab coat to help save sight

Our giving community is an essential part of this work, helping our researchers pursue new ideas, make important discoveries and continue working towards a future where preventable blindness is a thing of the past. On Medical Research Giving Day, your impact can go twice as far, with your donations matched by our generous Matched Giving Partner, **Wen Giving**, helping us drive sight-saving research even further forward.

Donations matched by



Visit our Medical Research Giving Day page at www.medicalresearchday.org.au/lei to learn more and show your support.



Four research themes changing lives

This Giving Day, we highlight four areas of Lions Eye Institute research – each working to protect, preserve, or restore sight for Western Australians and beyond.

Usher Syndrome

Led by **Associate Professor Fred Chen**. Gene therapy development for this rare inherited condition that affects both hearing and sight.



Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD)

Led by **Professor Chandra Balaratnasingam**. Treatments to preserve central vision and independence in older Australians. AMD affects the macula – the part of the eye responsible for detailed vision.



Childhood Myopia (Short-sightedness)

Led by **Professor David Mackey AO**. Early intervention methods to protect children's vision from sight-threatening complications later in life.



Visual Snow Syndrome

Led by **Professor Allison McKendrick**. Research into a neurological condition causing constant flickering across vision – affecting daily life and quality of vision.



Working together to tackle the leading cause of deafblindness



Usher syndrome is a rare inherited condition that robs children of both their hearing and sight – combining hearing loss with retinitis pigmentosa, a progressive deterioration of the retina, and in some cases a loss of balance.

It affects approximately one in 6,000 people worldwide and is the leading cause of deafblindness. At the moment, there are no approved treatments, making the research underway at the Lions Eye Institute all the more important.

A team effort

The Institute's approach to usher syndrome brings together clinical care, laboratory research, and cross-institutional collaboration. **Associate Professor Fred Chen**, Director of Research at the Institute, leads the Western Australian Retinal Degeneration (WARD) study, which facilitated genetic testing of 48 usher syndrome patients through the Australian Inherited Retinal Diseases Registry, and provided clinical monitoring and a pathway into future clinical trials. Because hearing loss typically appears before vision symptoms, the Institute's close partnership with Ear Science Institute Australia is helping to identify children with the condition earlier.

In the laboratory, **Dr Samuel McLenachan** and the Ocular Tissue Engineering Laboratory team use the Institute's stem cell robot to reprogram cells from usher syndrome patients, helping researchers understand the mutations driving the disease and screen potential treatments. **Dr Livia Carvalho's** Retinal Genomics and Therapy Laboratory adds another dimension – developing gene-independent therapies that target shared disease pathways, meaning treatments could one day benefit patients regardless of their specific genetic mutation.

Together with researchers from The University of Western Australia, Curtin, and Murdoch University, this ecosystem gives the Institute the reach to move from discovery science to clinical trials faster than any single team could alone.

Promising steps forward

Lions Vision Trials recently participated in the Nacuity C18-04 study – one of the only clinical trials for the vision loss associated with usher syndrome conducted in Australia. The trial tested NPI-001, an oral tablet designed to protect retinal cells by reducing oxidative stress. Results were encouraging: NPI-001 slowed photoreceptor loss by more than 50 per cent over two years, and participants experienced a nearly 30 per cent slower loss of visual function compared to placebo. Nacuity plans to launch a confirmatory study in 2026, and the Lions Eye Institute intends to take part.

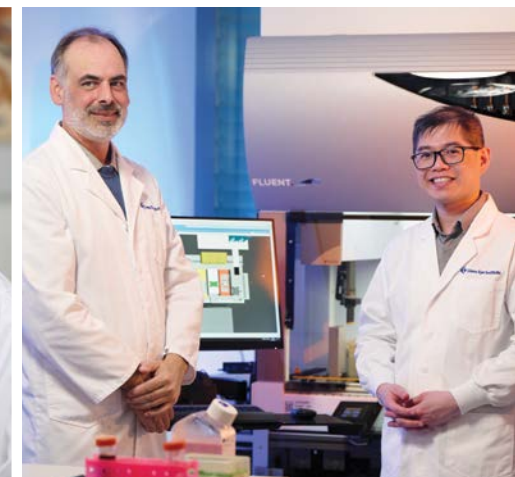
Why collaboration matters

Usher syndrome is rare, complex, and currently without a cure. The work happening across the Institute means that people living with the condition have access to world-class care, emerging therapies, and researchers who are committed to finding answers.

This Medical Research Giving Day, your support provides hope.



Dr Livia Carvalho



Dr Samuel McLenachan and Associate Professor Fred Chen with the stem cell robot

Taking on one of the world's most common causes of vision loss



Around 1.5 million Australians over the age of 50 have signs of age-related macular degeneration (AMD), a condition that damages the macula and affects central vision.¹

There are two forms: wet AMD, where abnormal blood vessels leak fluid beneath the retina, and dry AMD, where the cells of the macula slowly break down. The most advanced stage of dry AMD, geographic atrophy, had no approved treatment until very recently.

Decades of dedication

The Lions Eye Institute's commitment to AMD stretches back to our very beginnings. When **Emeritus Professor Ian Constable AO** established the institute in 1983, AMD research was among the first areas of focus. In 1990, a \$3,000 grant from the Lions Save-Sight Foundation helped launch **Emerita Professor Elizabeth Rakoczy's** pioneering gene therapy research for wet AMD. By the 2000s, the Institute had conducted one of Australia's first anti-VEGF trials – a treatment that would go on to transform wet AMD care worldwide. Professor Rakoczy's 'Bio-Factory' gene therapy approach later earned the 2017 CSL Florey Medal and was licensed internationally. That spirit of innovation continues today.



Dr Glen Power and Emerita Professor Elizabeth Rakoczy

A landmark moment for geographic atrophy

For decades, people living with geographic atrophy had no treatment options. That changed in 2025, when Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration approved SYFOVRE® (pegcetacoplan), the first treatment for geographic atrophy available in Australia, making Australia the first country outside the United States to approve it.



Associate Professor Fred Chen

This milestone was made possible, in part, by the Lions Eye Institute. **Associate Professor Fred Chen**, Director of Research at the Institute, led the Phase 3 OAKS study and its long-term extension, GALE – the clinical trials that underpinned SYFOVRE's approval. Both studies were supported by Lions Vision Trials, our dedicated clinical trials unit.



Professor Chandra Balaratnasingam

Research across the full journey

Professor Chandra Balaratnasingam, Medical Director of the Institute, and Associate Professor Chen are now leading a wide range of ongoing AMD studies. For geographic atrophy, this includes the PHOENIX study trialling Tinarebant, a once-daily oral tablet, as well as studies exploring new injection therapies and an observational study that may pave the way for future gene therapy.

For wet AMD, where treatments already exist, the research focus is shifting toward improving quality of life; reducing the frequency of injections and finding longer-lasting solutions. Current studies include the Constance study, led by Professor Balaratnasingam, alongside the Velodrome and Portal ROCHE Port Delivery System studies.

With your support this Medical Research Giving Day, we can continue to break new ground in vision science.

¹ Macular Disease Foundation of Australia

Running toward the world stage



When Morland Smith won the Queensland secondary schools one-mile championship as a teenager, he could hardly have imagined where running would take him. Now 88, he is preparing to compete at the World Masters Athletics Championships in Daegu, South Korea, with no intention of slowing down.

Above: Morland at age 86 competing in a steeplechase event at the WA State Championships in March 2024, photographed by his daughter Cathy Middleton

Morland has been a patient at the Lions Eye Institute for over 30 years. He was originally treated by **Emeritus Professor Ian Constable AO**, and now sees **Professor Chandra Balaratnasingam**. He lives with dry AMD, a condition that affects central vision, and today relies on his peripheral sight. It has reshaped how he runs, but not whether he does.

When it came to competing in para athletics for the first time, the Institute played a direct role. Professor Balaratnasingam submitted an ophthalmology report to Paralympics Australia, which – following additional assessments at the University of Western Australia – granted Morland a T13 classification, permitting him to have a sighted assistant help him on the track. He found it opened up more than he expected. "The para qualification was beneficial, especially in events like the steeplechase, as permission was granted for carers to assist me in the water jump component," he says.

In September 2025, at the Oceania Masters Athletics Championships in Brisbane, Morland entered seven events and won seven gold medals. Though he was the only competitor in his 85-89 age division, this is still his best championship haul to date, and his son was there to assist him on the track. Daegu will be a different proposition, with competitors in Morland's M85 age division attending from as far abroad as Canada, the US, Brazil and Japan. Nevertheless, "I would be hopeful of obtaining a couple of medals," he says. In Daegu, Morland will be assisted by his daughter and son-in-law.

To others facing vision loss and wondering what remains possible, his advice is clear:

“I would suggest that they endeavour to participate in sporting events, perhaps with the assistance of a carer for support.”

At 88, with no ailments and no medications, Morland Smith is proof of what that looks like in practice.

Stories like Morland's are made possible by the generosity of people like you. This Medical Research Giving Day, help us continue to fund world-leading research that protects sight, restores vision and brings hope to people living with eye disease.



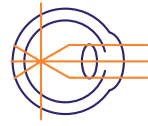
Above: Morland at age 87 with his seven medals from the Oceania Masters Athletics Competition in Brisbane in September 2025, photographed by his son Tony Smith

Below: Morland with his daughter Cathy Middleton. Credit: City of Stirling.



Addressing the world's fastest-growing vision problem

Myopia, or short-sightedness, is the leading cause of vision impairment in children globally.



When the eye grows too long from front to back, distant objects become blurry. But the real concern is what comes later: a longer eye significantly increases the risk of serious complications, including retinal detachment, glaucoma, and myopic maculopathy. An estimated 25 to 30 per cent of adults in Perth currently have myopia, with projections suggesting half the world's population could be affected by 2050.

The Lions Eye Institute's groundbreaking research into childhood myopia is led by **Professor David Mackey AO**, a founding member of the international Consortium for Refractive Error and Myopia in Children (CREAM-kids). Working with postdoctoral research fellow **Dr Gareth Lingham**, the team has created eye growth charts – published in **JAMA Ophthalmology** – that track children's eye development against age, sex, and region-specific benchmarks, much like monitoring height and weight. This paper highlights major regional differences showing that children in East Asia – where myopia rates reach 80% in school leavers – have much longer eyes from an early age, putting them at higher risk of vision loss.

Professor Mackey's research shows that rising myopia rates are being driven by children spending less time outside, with increased screen time as a contributing factor. The reason is simple but powerful – natural sunlight is up to 1,000 times brighter than artificial lighting. In an office environment, there are only a few hundred lux (units of brightness), but outdoors that measurement reaches tens of thousands. This brightness exposure appears to protect developing eyes. Health experts now recommend children spend at least two hours outdoors daily, even in winter. When the UV index is three or above, follow SunSmart recommendations to protect their eyes and skin.

Without intervention, projections suggest **half of all Australians could be short-sighted by 2050**. But Professor Mackey's and Dr Lingham's research offers an evidence-based solution. Prevention is achievable through simple, everyday habits – getting children



Lincoln wears glasses, like millions of Australian children. Myopia carries long-term risks – early intervention and prevention are key.

outdoors for at least two hours daily is as effective as it is accessible. This finding transforms myopia from an inevitable health burden into a largely preventable condition.

Lincoln (pictured above) wears glasses, like millions of Australian children. Myopia may seem like a simple case of needing glasses, but the long-term stakes are high. Early intervention and prevention can reduce the risk of sight-threatening complications later in life. Your support makes research like this possible. By giving today, you can help researchers like Professor Mackey turn their expertise into practical advice families can use now, while helping create even better options for the next generation.

Seeing through the static: Why visual snow syndrome needs our attention

Imagine looking at the world through an analogue television that can't quite find its signal. A constant visual "static" overlaying everything you see, day and night. For people living with visual snow syndrome, this isn't a metaphor. It's an everyday reality.

Mel, a patient of the Lions Eye Institute, describes going "from someone who wore glasses for mild astigmatism to sometimes finding it almost impossible to see in the evenings." Migraines have followed, sometimes so debilitating she needs to lie down. Light sensitivity means she can't always go outside, with LED lighting proving particularly difficult. "Some days I can't drive at all, and there's no way of knowing which kind of day it's going to be. Then the stress seems to make everything worse."

Mel's path to diagnosis took her through a string of specialists, each pointing her elsewhere, before she finally reached the Lions Eye Institute. The relief of diagnosis was real, but complicated. "You're not going to go blind, but there's also not much that can be done about the other symptoms," says Mel, "People don't understand," she adds. "Education would be a really good thing, so that people take it seriously."

Visual snow syndrome is a neurological condition characterised by persistent visual "snow," along with additional symptoms including trailing images, sensitivity to light, and difficulty seeing at night. It is thought to affect approximately 2 per cent of the population¹ – yet it only received formal International Classification of Diseases 11th Revision (ICD-11) classification in early 2025, after years of being misattributed to migraine or dismissed altogether. "Awareness is improving, but there are still plenty of people who have gone years without a diagnosis," says **Dr Cassandra Brooks**, research fellow at the Institute. "There are a lot of unmet needs."

Magda Toth (left) and Andrew Porter (middle-left), who are supporting research into visual snow syndrome, with Professor Allison McKendrick (middle-right) and Dr Cassandra Brooks (right)



An illustration of how people with visual snow syndrome experience vision. Typical vision is depicted on the left, while the right illustrates some of the key visual symptoms of visual snow syndrome.

What the research is showing and what we're doing about it

Dr Brooks and collaborators **Professor Allison McKendrick**, The University of Western Australia Chair in Optometry Research at the Institute, and Dr Bao Nguyen at the University of Melbourne recently published a review in the **Annual Review of Vision Science**² examining how visual perception research is advancing understanding of visual snow syndrome, and how behavioural vision tests could one day become objective tools for tracking severity and measuring treatment response in clinical trials. The team is also currently surveying Australian optometrists to understand what the profession knows about visual snow syndrome and what education they need.

Stories like Mel's are why this research matters. This Medical Research Giving Day, your support will help the Lions Eye Institute continue its crucial sight-saving work, driving the discoveries that bring real hope to people living with vision loss.

¹ Kondziella D, Olsen MH, Dreier JP. 2020. Prevalence of visual snow syndrome in the UK. Eur. J. Neurol. 27:764–72

² Brooks CJ, Nguyen BN, McKendrick AM. 2026. Visual Perception in Visual Snow Syndrome. Annual Review of Vision Science 12. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-vision-103025-035537>

How Lions Vision Trials bridges the gap between laboratory research and patient care – and gives hope to people living with eye disease

In a research laboratory, a scientist makes a breakthrough. A new compound shows promise, animal testing succeeds, and the early data looks encouraging. Then comes the critical moment that separates hope from reality: Can this discovery help patients?

Before any new treatment can become widely available, it must undergo rigorous clinical testing to prove it is safe and effective. At the Lions Eye Institute (LEI), the Lions Vision Trials (LVT) team plays a vital role during this pivotal transition process.

As a dedicated clinical research team within the LEI, LVT plans, manages, and oversees clinical studies for innovative therapies targeting eye diseases. Today, it stands as one of the largest ophthalmic clinical trial units in the Southern Hemisphere.

JoAnne Forrest, Director of Clinical Research, describes LVT's role within the Institute as "vital." It serves as a cornerstone of high-quality, ethical, and efficient clinical research while bridging the gap between bench science and clinical patient care.

For many devastating eye conditions, approved treatments do not yet exist. Patients face progressive vision loss while waiting for scientific advances to translate into therapies. Simultaneously, researchers

developing these breakthroughs need a safe, rigorous, and ethical pathway to test them in patients.

At the Institute, LVT provides that pathway.

In collaboration with LEI ophthalmologists, the LVT team works closely with national and international researchers, pharmaceutical companies, and biotechnology innovators to conduct Phase I through Phase IV ophthalmic clinical trials as well as Investigator Initiated Studies. The studies evaluate the safety and clinical efficacy of new therapies, medical devices, diagnostics, and healthcare interventions – including ground-breaking therapies invented right here by LEI's own researchers.

LVT possesses the specialized expertise required to navigate the full spectrum of clinical research, guiding potential treatments from early-stage safety testing to established clinical efficacy. Most importantly, these clinical trials give eligible patients early access to potentially life-changing therapies long before they hit the commercial market.

Meet the Lions Vision Trials team



Dr Randolph Dobson, Miocevic Fellow and sub-investigator for the Abacus-2 Study trial, and Victoria Mendis, clinical trial coordinator, demonstrate the room light direction test and the object identification test, which evaluate functional vision for people with very low vision.

A prime example of this impact is Tinarebant, a promising new treatment for Stargardt disease – a rare, inherited retinal degenerative condition that currently has no approved cure.

Developed by Belite Bio and trialed at LEI, Tinarebant is the first oral medication to show clinically meaningful outcomes in slowing vision loss. Led by Principal Investigator **Associate Professor Fred Chen**, the LVT team made it possible for Western Australian paediatric patients to be among the very first in the world to access this experimental, pill-form treatment.

LVT is also spearheading trials focused on improving treatment delivery, boosting patient quality of life, and offering tailored options to meet individual patient needs.

A study LVT is currently conducting with **Professor Chandra Balaratnasingam** and Associate Professor Chen, has provided LEI study participants early access to Roche's Port Delivery Platform for neovascular age-related macular degeneration (wet AMD). While already approved in the USA and Europe, this surgically implanted device is not yet available for routine clinical use in Australia. It holds the potential to maintain a patient's vision with as few as two treatments per year – a dramatic, life-changing reduction compared to standard therapies that require more frequent intraocular injections.

"What truly sets LVT apart", JoAnne emphasizes, "is the profound care and compassion the team provides to every study participant. A core focus of daily operations is ensuring that participants are fully informed, understand what their study involvement entails, and that they feel genuinely supported throughout their journey."

Clinical research is never exclusively about following protocols; it is about cultivating an environment built on trust, respect, patient safety, and data integrity.

LVT's strength and track record rely on deep integration with the Institute's leading trial doctors and clinical teams. When a trial concludes and data proves a treatment is safe and effective and regulatory approvals are obtained, all teams work with global partners to support translating these therapies into routine patient care.

This is how science becomes medicine. This is how research becomes treatment.



The work of Lions Vision Trials reminds us that clinical research and the process of discovering new treatments for eye diseases is built on teamwork and providing support for patients through the clinical trial journey. Behind every clinical trial is a patient choosing to participate in the hope of improving their own eye health while also helping create better treatment options for others.

For more information about Lions Vision Trials and current research activities, scan the QR code to visit the website or email lionsvisiontrials@lei.org.au.



A life in pursuit of sight

Professor Bill Morgan AO honoured for a lifetime of innovation, compassion and curiosity



Professor Bill Morgan was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in the 2026 King's Birthday Honours

When **Professor Bill Morgan** was appointed an **Officer of the Order of Australia (AO)** in the 2026 King's Birthday Honours, it recognised far more than an outstanding career in ophthalmology. It celebrated a lifetime of asking difficult questions, challenging conventional thinking and pursuing better outcomes for people facing blindness.

For supporters of the Lions Eye Institute, the honour is especially significant. Professor Morgan has been part of the Institute for more than three decades as clinician, researcher, inventor, teacher and former Managing Director. Throughout that time, his work has reflected the values that define the Institute: **world-class research, exceptional patient care and a determination to ensure breakthroughs reach the people who need them most.**

What has always set Professor Morgan apart is his **insatiable curiosity**. His research into the complex relationship between pressure, blood flow and the optic nerve has reshaped the understanding of glaucoma and continues to influence patient care around the world.

Solving problems that matter

Glaucoma, often called the 'silent thief of sight', gradually damages the optic nerve and remains a leading cause of irreversible blindness worldwide.

Professor Morgan's work spans **fundamental discoveries about glaucoma and entirely new surgical treatments**. Among his significant achievements was co-inventing the **XEN® Gel Stent**, a minimally invasive glaucoma implant now used internationally to help preserve vision for hundreds of thousands of patients.

More recently, he collaborated with Indonesian ophthalmologist **Dr Virna Oktariana** to develop the **Virna Glaucoma Drainage Device**, an affordable implant designed to make sight-saving glaucoma surgery more accessible in lower-income countries. In 2024, they also launched a paediatric version.

It reflects Professor Morgan's philosophy: **innovation should not simply be clever, it should improve lives.**

That philosophy continues to drive his research. He is leading work to develop a **handheld device capable of measuring intracranial pressure without invasive procedures**. If successful, it could transform diagnosis and monitoring of conditions affecting the brain and optic nerve, with applications across ophthalmology, neurology and space medicine. Professor Morgan plans to test the device in zero gravity for the first time in 2027.



Dr Virna Oktariana (left) and Professor Bill Morgan AO (right) examining a patient's eyes at the launch of the paediatric version of the Virna Glaucoma Drainage Device in Indonesia

Looking beyond Australia

Professor Morgan's global contribution extends beyond research and innovation. For decades, he has **worked extensively in Indonesia**, teaching surgeons, mentoring researchers and strengthening local eye care through enduring partnerships with hospitals and universities. His focus has always been **collaboration – working alongside local clinicians to develop solutions that are affordable, sustainable and appropriate** for the communities they serve.

Since 2000, Professor Morgan has visited Indonesia with the **John Fawcett Foundation** once or twice a year, teaching, operating and conducting research. This work has grown into a formal reciprocal observation program, with young Indonesian doctors from Bali and Jakarta visiting the Lions Eye Institute for short observerships. Two Australian trainee eye surgeons now also visit Indonesia annually.

Professor Morgan is dedicated to strengthening **Indonesia–Australia relations**, which he believes will be mutually advantageous. The research collaboration is now extending into large-scale population screening for glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy and other eye diseases, with Lions Eye Institute academic and scientific staff working closely with Indonesian ophthalmologists.

Did you know?

Professor Bill Morgan AO:

- Performed eye surgery on Hsing Hsing, an **orangutan** who had glaucoma, at Perth Zoo.
- Has examined **elephants** with eye problems in Bali.
- Co-invented the **XEN® Gel Stent** and **Virna Glaucoma Drainage Device**, helping prevent vision loss in glaucoma patients globally and in Indonesia.
- Is planning to **go to zero gravity** to test an intracranial pressure measurement device he is developing.

Curiosity without boundaries

Professor Morgan's curiosity has taken him into some unexpected places. In 2008, one of his patients was **Hsing Hsing, the much-loved diabetic orangutan at Perth Zoo**. Performing delicate eye surgery on an orangutan, in collaboration with a veterinary ophthalmologist from Murdoch, was certainly outside the typical ophthalmologist's workload – but for Bill it was another opportunity to apply his expertise where it could make a difference.

His interests have also extended into **space medicine**, investigating how changes in pressure affect astronauts' vision during long-duration spaceflight. The same scientific questions that help explain glaucoma on Earth may help protect eyesight in space – a reminder that **great research often connects seemingly unrelated worlds**.

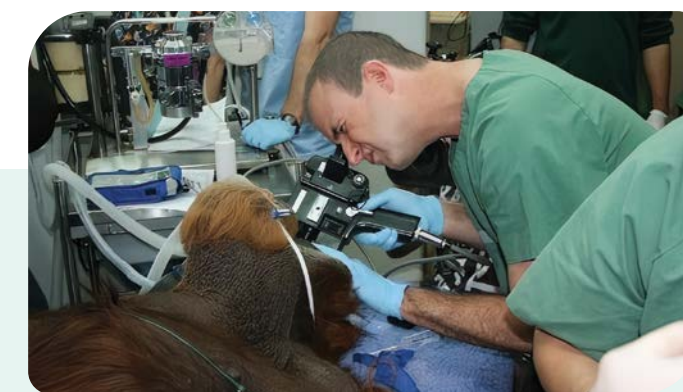
A well-deserved honour

For everyone at the Lions Eye Institute, Professor Bill Morgan's appointment as an **Officer of the Order of Australia** is a proud moment. It recognises a clinician who has cared for countless patients, an inventor whose ideas have preserved vision around the world, a researcher who continues to push the boundaries of science, and a mentor who has inspired generations of clinicians and scientists.

Above all, it recognises someone who has never lost sight of why the work matters.

“Every discovery, every new device, every collaboration and every patient represents another step towards a future where fewer people lose their vision,” said Professor Morgan AO.

Congratulations, Professor Bill Morgan AO, on this richly deserved recognition.



Professor Bill Morgan AO examining Hsing Hsing the orangutan's eyes in 2008. Hsing Hsing lived at Perth Zoo and was found to have glaucoma in his right eye, causing 98 per cent vision loss in that eye

Supporting a friend through community fundraising



When Issy Gray received her diagnosis at the start of her medical career, the news was as unexpected as it was frightening.

A medical student in the final years of her degree, she had noticed floaters and flashers in her vision. Within weeks, she learned she had retinitis pigmentosa (RP), a rare, inherited eye disease that causes gradual vision loss, with no available treatment for her specific genetic mutation.

"I really wasn't expecting it, and it threw a lot of doubt and uncertainty into my life," Issy said. "I was told my sight would gradually decline and that the doctor didn't think I would have any functional sight in 30 years."

Issy was referred to **Associate Professor Fred Chen**, Director of Research at the Lions Eye Institute and a leading specialist in inherited retinal disease. The care she has received since has been transformative.

"During my first appointment, Associate Professor Chen advised that he didn't think I would end up legally blind, so that was a positive. I have felt really supported since being under their care, and the amount of information I'm able to receive at each appointment has been very reassuring," Issy said.

"Issy's experience reflects what many people with inherited retinal disease face: uncertainty and long-term impact," said Associate Professor Chen. "At the Lions Eye Institute, our clinical care and research are closely linked. It is this kind of support that helps us maintain our progress towards better treatments."



Issy Gray speaking to 7News on her journey living with retinitis pigmentosa



From left to right: Sharni Strong, Dr Glen Power and Issy Gray attending an event at the Institute



Issy Gray and Sharni Strong at the 2026 HBF Run for a Reason

Taking action

For Issy's close friend and fellow medical student, **Sharni Strong**, watching someone she cared about face that kind of uncertainty was a turning point. Sharni had completed a clinical placement at the Lions Eye Institute during her studies, giving her a first-hand understanding of the research being done on conditions like Issy's.

This year, she laced up her running shoes for the HBF Run for a Reason – and ran a half-marathon in Issy's honour.

"When Issy was diagnosed, it was devastating for her and for all of us who care for her," Sharni said. "The Lions Eye Institute are leaders in genetic research for retinitis pigmentosa, which made them an obvious choice to support."

Sharni and other runners from the Institute raised \$8,648 for sight-saving research at the Lions Eye Institute as part of the 2026 HBF Run for a Reason.

Beyond donations: How you can get involved



There are many ways to support the Lions Eye Institute beyond making a financial contribution. Whether you have time to spare, lived experience of an eye condition, or simply care about protecting access to sight-saving care, there is a role for you.

Volunteer with us

The Institute welcomes volunteers across research, administration, clinic support, and fundraising. Our Concierge Program is particularly popular – easily recognisable in their vibrant red vests, our Volunteer Concierges escort patients to their appointments, arrange transport, and make every visit to our Nedlands clinic a welcoming experience. Call **(08) 9381 0777** or email recruitment@lei.org.au to find out more.

Shape our research

We believe the best research is guided by the people it aims to help. Through our Consumer and Community Involvement (CCI) program, patients, carers, and community members work alongside researchers – sharing experiences and helping shape research priorities. By joining our Consumer Registry, you may be invited to review patient information materials, share perspectives on new research ideas, or join advisory groups. Participation is always voluntary. Email cci@lei.org.au to register your interest.

Donate eye tissue

Eye tissue donation restores sight and transforms lives. Established in 1986, the Lions Eye Bank has supported more than 5,000 procedures across Western Australia. To register as a donor, visit DonateLife WA at donatelife.gov.au, or call the Australian Organ Donor Register on **1800 777 203**.

Fundraise for us

Community fundraising is a rewarding way to make a direct impact on sight-saving research. You might take on a personal challenge, host a local event like a raffle or trivia night, or request donations in lieu of birthday or anniversary gifts. Have your own event idea? Call **(08) 9381 0791** or email donorcare@lei.org.au to speak about fundraising.

Advocate for eye care

Community advocacy makes a real difference. A recent campaign helped protect access to intravitreal injection (IVI) treatment in private hospitals, safeguarding ongoing care for around 13,000 patients. Whether it is speaking up for research funding, sharing your story, or supporting campaigns like this one, your voice matters.



Dr Khine Zaw taking part in the 2026 HBF Run for a Reason to raise money for the Lions Eye Institute. Credit: NORTHSOUTH LIVE on behalf of HBF Run for a Reason.

You don't need a lab coat to save lives



Double your impact this Medical Research Giving Day

On Wednesday 9 September, your generosity can have twice the impact.

Thanks to our Matched Giving Partner, Wen Giving, every donation received on Medical Research Giving Day will be **matched dollar for dollar**, helping fund life-changing vision research at the Lions Eye Institute.

This Giving Day, we're shining a light on just some of the groundbreaking research happening across the Lions Eye Institute:



Age-related macular degeneration



Myopia



Visual Snow Syndrome



Usher Syndrome

This is your opportunity to help protect sight, restore vision and create hope for people living with eye diseases.

One day. Double the impact.

Your donation will be **DOUBLED**.

Thanks to our Matched Giving Partner, **Wen Giving**, every donation received on 9 September will be **matched dollar for dollar**.*



Donate online

Scan the QR code to make your matched donation on 9 September.

OR

Complete the form below and return it in the enclosed reply-paid envelope.

Yes! I'd like my donation doubled.

Please accept my donation of \$

☐ Please process my donation on Medical Research Giving Day (9 September) so my gift can be matched.

Please find enclosed my ☐ cheque ☐ money order OR, please debit my ☐ Mastercard ☐ Amex ☐ Visa

Card No: Expiry Date: /

Cardholder's Name: Signature:

Tax receipt details:

Name:

Address:

Suburb: Postcode:

Telephone: Email:

☐ I would be interested to learn more about how I can include the Lions Eye Institute in my Will.

☐ I have already provided for the Lions Eye Institute in my Will.

☐ I would like to be included in donor recognition.

We recognise the generosity of donors in materials such as our annual report and recognition boards.

Every gift
will be
matched dollar
for dollar.*



**Thank you for
helping save sight.**

Mail to:
Lions Eye Institute
Reply Paid 62815
Nedlands WA 6009
(No stamp required)

Or call (08) 9381 0777