

## **International support for Operation Eyesight's work is growing, made evident by the creation of Operation Eyesight Australia.**

Officially launched August 2 at the Easts Leagues Club in Sydney's Bondi Junction, the new organization is charged with inspiring Australians to support Operation Eyesight's unique approach to eye health among people threatened by blindness and low vision. This approach, well-understood by Operation Eyesight's donors in North America, is already well on the way to being embraced in the South Pacific.

According to Jim O'Sullivan, Regional Manager for OE Australia, several individuals and organizations have taken great interest in the concept of high-quality, sustainable eye care. One such organization is PixiFoto, a chain of family portrait studios. At the launch event, Peter Watt, Chairman of the PixiFoto Foundation, presented a donation of \$50,000 to Brian Elton, Chairman of OE Australia. The donation will support an initiative to prevent childhood blindness in Zambia.

Others drawn to Operation Eyesight's message, and who attended the event, included film actress Gia Carides, Canadian Consul-General Richard Kohler, Waverley Mayor George Newhouse as well as representatives of the International Centre for Eyecare Education (ICEE), the Fred Hollows Foundation and Optometry Giving Sight. With OE Australia's official launch, general fundraising and profile-building activities will kick into high gear.

These developments are the result of many months of groundwork, pioneered by Chip Morgan, Vice-President of New Ventures and Project Development – an Australian now living in Canada. Foundational work includes the creation of a volunteer Board of Directors, hiring staff and acquiring charitable society status for the purpose of issuing tax receipts to Australian donors.

O'Sullivan is confident in Operation Eyesight's potential to raise significant support in his country. He says that Australia, like Canada, has strong relationships with many developing nations, and enthusiastically participates in projects aimed at reducing poverty and restoring health.

"Australians recognize their responsibilities as global citizens and embrace the concept of multiculturalism that is evident to a high degree in both countries," he says. "Operation Eyesight is an organization that, in the eyes of the World Health Organization, has 'got it right' with its community development-based approach to blindness prevention."

Success at raising support depends on building connections and partnerships – O'Sullivan along with Board Directors Brian Elton and Peter Moscott each have many years experience in this area and have been putting it to good use. They plan to build on their partnership with PixiFoto and collaborate with other eyesight-related organizations, such as the Fred Hollows Foundation, which is based in Australia.

Another important partner is ICEE which provides work space to OE Australia in its offices at the University of New South Wales . Professor Brien Holden, Executive Chair for ICEE, is a world leader in international eye health – he and his organization collaborate with the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness and with the L.V. Prasad Eye Institute.

Working closely with parent organization Operation Eyesight Universal, based in Calgary , O’Sullivan and his colleagues will take advantage of the expertise of the fundraising arm of Operation Eyesight in Canada where there is an ongoing quest for excellence in establishing channels of communication with donors. With a strong organization in Australia able to maximize donor participation, more people in the developing world will get the help they need.

“Through a collaborative approach, Operation Eyesight works to combat unnecessary blindness by establishing sustainable collaborative projects for high quality eye care for the poorest of the poor,” says Chip Morgan . “The result of our work extends far beyond vision – the result of our work extends to other opportunities like education and better nutrition for some of the world’s poorest communities.”

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