Vision 2020 Australia
2020 year in review

VISION 2020 THE RIGHT TO SIGHT AUSTRALIA

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF VISION

This time last year, Vision 2020 Australia was working with its members on plans for a 2020 that would be celebrating and leveraging the unique opportunities that particular year presented.

Public awareness raising activities, member events, strengthened political engagement and advocacy activities were all in planning stages when the impacts of COVID-19 began to be felt by the sector and it, like the rest of Australia, pivoted to new operating models and priorities.

We are proud that, despite the challenges posed by this year, there have been significant gains made by, and for, the eye health and vision sector as Vision 2020 Australia celebrated its 20th birthday. This document summarises some of those, which have been achieved through the joint efforts of member organisations working with their peak body.

Government advocacy and engagement

- Strong engagement of Australian Government, including:
  - Prime Ministerial support for sector through World Sight Day message and planned round table discussion with sector (cancelled due to pandemic).
  - Continued support of Minister Hunt and other Cabinet Ministers for improving eye health and vision care, both for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and other Australians.
  - Virtual meetings with Minister Colbeck and good engagement with both his and Minister Robert's office on both immediate and longer-term issues related to blindness and low vision.
- Australian government leadership on the global stage, where it co-sponsored a World Health Assembly Resolution committing all member states to action in response to the World Report on Vision.
- Ongoing engagement with Department of Health and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade officials on diverse range of current and emerging issues impacting the sector in Australia and internationally.
- New funding committed by Australian and Victorian Governments to the sector:
  - The Australian Government committed $3.6 million for the Second National Eye Health Survey.
  - The Australian Government continued support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye health and vision – further $1.5million for implementation of Strong Eyes, Strong Communities priorities as well as an additional $1.6 million of funding for additional slit lamps and equipment through a Brien Holden Foundation led consortium.
  - The Australian Government introduced more flexibility in funding and program arrangements for disability and aged care services during the COVID-19 pandemic, then extended this flexibility into the following year, a development welcomed by blindness and low vision providers.
  - The Victorian Government extended funding for the Victorian Vision Initiative to end June 2021.

Submissions, policy statements and research

2020 was a strong year for collective voice and national policy making.

Across 2020, there were a total of 14 meetings of the four national policy committees and a further 58 working group meetings and workshops. In total, over 70 representatives from member organisations participated in those meetings.

A total of 12 sector submissions were made in 2020:

- Submission to Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety (January 2020)
- Review of Aged Care Workforce Regulation (Department of Health, June 2020)
- National Injury Prevention Strategy: 2020-2030 (Department of Health, June 2020)
- Aged care system governance, market management and roles and responsibilities (Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, July 2020)
- Draft Indigenous Evaluation Strategy (Productivity Commission, August 2020)
- Revised Outreach Service Delivery Standards and Reporting Template (Department of Health, August 2020)
- Review of NDIA Support Coordination Service Model (National Disability Insurance Agency, September 2020)
- First Nations Peoples with disability – blindness and low vision perspectives (Disability Royal Commission, September 2020)
- National Preventive Health Strategy (Department of Health, September 2020)
- Third Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities 2020-2022 (Department of Health, October 2020)
- A new National Disability Strategy (Department of Social Services, October 2020)
- Review of Guidelines for Preventive Activities in General Practice, 9th Ed (Royal Australasian College of General Practitioners, November 2020).

In addition, Vision 2020 Australia and its members finalised:

- The Adult Referral Pathway for Blindness and Low Vision Services
- A Position Statement on proposed establishment of NDIA Independent Assessments

Over 2020, work also progressed in several areas to strengthen both the existing sector evidence base and build a stronger case for research investment in eye health and vision:

- Commissioned research regarding public cataract surgery data (awaiting public release)
- Initial work to support development of a proposed eye research collaborative, that will bring together all interested parties to develop sector priorities for research, inform future submissions to government on research priorities and strengthen advocacy around the case for expanding support for ophthalmic research.

Member events and engagement

Parliamentary Friends Group events planned for March and September were cancelled due to COVID-19, as well as the CEO Strategy Day (also scheduled for late March).

There were however some virtual member events held, including:

- The Inaugural Barry Jones Vision Oration was held via a national webinar. Named in honour of The Hon Professor Barry Jones AC, Vision 2020 Australia's patron and long term Chair, the oration was delivered by Dr James Muecke AM, ophthalmologist and Australian of the Year to a large and diverse audience.
- A member only webinar regarding the Second National Eye Health Survey, attended by more than 60 participants from member organisations.

While we look forward to resuming face to face events in 2021, we will likely supplement these with virtual events to provide members with a range of opportunities to connect with current and emerging issues across the sector.

Vision 2020 Australia conducted two surveys of members in 2020:

- A survey of member CEOs/executive representatives was conducted in April 2020 to gauge the cross-sector impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. While some responding organisations indicated the pandemic had seen an increase in demand for their services, the majority reported no change or a moderate reduction in demand. Around 80% of respondents reported establishment and/or expansion of remote working and/or teleservice models, with the majority reporting either redeployment and/or reductions in staffing. The majority of members anticipated some modest reduction in overall revenue for 2019-20 and 2020-21, with a small number anticipating that the impacts of the pandemic may be more significant in the 2020-21 financial year.
- The Biannual Vision 2020 Australia member survey, which covered a range of topics related to the role of the organisation and its context within the eye health and vision care sector. The results will help the Vision 2020 Australia Board better understand how well it is meeting member expectations, and how it can consolidate and/or adapt the organisation's efforts to best meet the needs and priorities of members.

Governance

The Vision 2020 Australia Board met six times in 2020, with additional meetings scheduled to manage COVID-19 related issues for the organisation and the sector. Board committees and working groups met a total of 10 times over the period.

The 2020 Annual General Meeting marked a significant change in governance for the organisation, with the retirement of the Hon Amanda Vanstone AO after six years as Board Chair, as well as the retirement of Board Directors Dr David Andrews and Ms Megan McAlpine.

The organisation was pleased to welcome the Hon Christopher Pyne as the new Board Chair, along with other new Directors A/Prof Heather Mack, Jane Schuller and Shaun Tatipata and returning Directors Jaki Adams-Barton, Dale Cleaver, Dr Jess Gallagher, Andrew Harris, Dee Hopkins, Maureen O'Keefe and Tony Starkey.

The organisation continued to exercise strong, conservative financial management with the Board allocating surplus funds from the 2019-20 year to initiatives focussed on increasing the profile of and support for the sector.

Victorian Vision Initiative

The Vision Initiative is a Victorian Government funded eye health promotion program. During 2020, it continued to deliver an extensive program of education, engagement and awareness raising in partnership with a wide range of organisations.

There were a range of key developments to the suite of eye health training for primary health professionals including:

- New accredited online eye health training for Diabetes Educators developed for the Australian Diabetes Educators Association.
- An update and relaunch of the ThinkGP 'Common Eye Conditions' accredited online module for general practitioners.
- Renewed sponsorship and refreshed content for the Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association, allowing all Victorian nurses to access the course for free.

In a new partnership with Quit, the Vision Initiative developed a smoking cessation brief advice accredited online training module, and accompanying resources for eye health professionals.

World Sight Day celebrations, including a video developed in partnership with Diabetes Victoria, promotesd the importance of continuing your diabetes eye care post COVID-19.

The Vision Initiative adapted to COVID-19 restrictions by delivering our education sessions via webinar and expanding our use of other virtual formats. This included:

- A series of educational webinars with the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health
- Diabetes Victoria: Living Well With Diabetes podcast, 'Diabetes and Eye Health'
- Ongoing social media activity and an update to our website

In 2020, our partnership with VACCHO supported comprehensive consultation with Elders and Community to develop culturally appropriate, eye health promotion resources for children and people living with complex, chronic diseases.

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