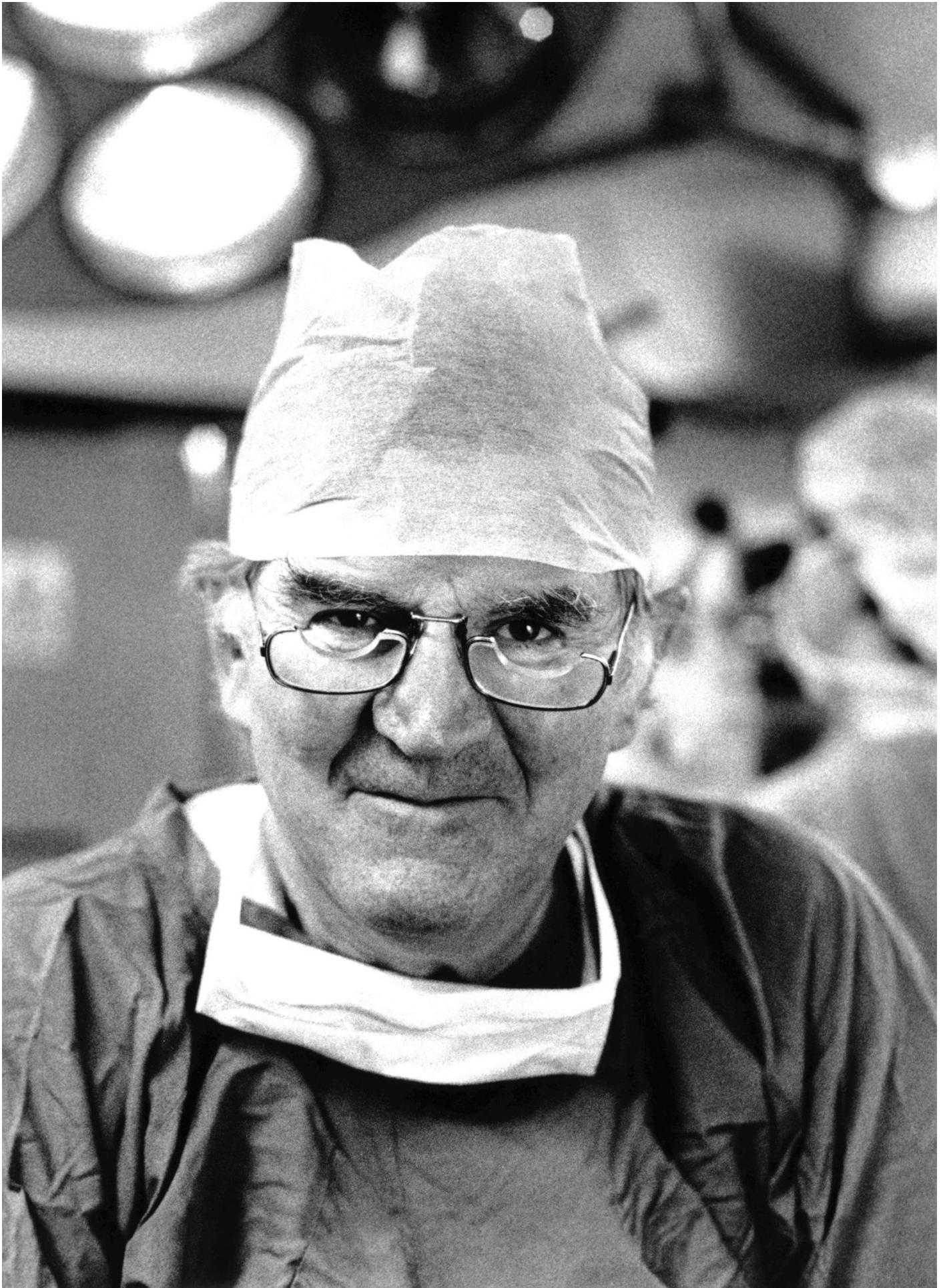


PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION 2020-21

**BUDGET POLICY DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY
DECEMBER 2019**





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INTRODUCTION

THE FRED HOLLOWES FOUNDATION

The Fred Hollows Foundation (The Foundation) is an international development organisation working to end avoidable blindness. Established in 1992, The Foundation trains doctors, nurses and healthcare workers, distributes antibiotics, raises money for much needed equipment and medical facilities and performs eye operations exactly like the ones Fred Hollows did more than 30 years ago.

As a global leader in eye health, The Foundation works to improve health systems and eliminate avoidable blindness. Through the expertise of health, development and research professionals, established partnerships with leading academic and development organisations, and with national health ministries, and their service delivery arms in 25 countries, The Foundation has a deep understanding of the drivers of health care barriers and what's needed to develop functioning health systems.

The Strategic Plan for 2019-2023¹ positions The Foundation to continue its positive impact on the lives of many globally:

Our Vision

A world in which no person is needlessly blind or vision impaired.

Our Purpose

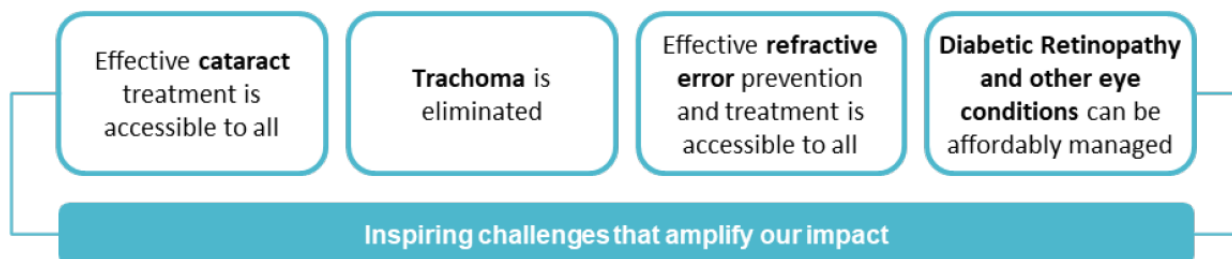
We are determined to deliver Fred Hollows' vision of preventing blindness and restoring sight.

We work around the world so that no one is left behind, and in Australia we work tirelessly to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can always exercise their right to sight and good health.

Our priority is to work with communities to improve their own eye health. We do this through life-changing surgeries and treatments, training doctors and health workers, generating new ideas, and pushing for change at all levels – from local to global.

Goals to deliver impact

To deliver maximum impact, our work will be driven by four impact goals:



¹ 2018 Fred Hollows Foundation Financial Statements

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Fred Hollows Foundation is a committed development partner of the Australian government. The proposed projects will contribute to the Australian Government's *Pacific Step-up* agenda to secure a stable and resilient Pacific Region.

Avoidable blindness and vision loss are pressing global development issues. It is an area where the Australian Government has already made a significant impact, delivering programs to address avoidable blindness and vision loss, transforming individual lives and delivering long-lasting benefits to families and communities. Ninety percent of people living with avoidable blindness are in developing countries, but four out of five people experiencing blindness can have their condition treated or prevented. In many cases, blindness can be corrected with a simple 20-minute procedure, immediately impacting on the life of the individual, their family and the wider community.

As people live longer and populations rise, the number of people who are blind is predicted to triple globally from 36 million to 115 million over the next 30 years. The highest burden of eye disease is carried by low and middle-income countries such as those in the Pacific Region. Avoidable blindness in the Pacific undermines an individual's ability to participate in the workforce and education system, impacting economic development. Restoring sight allows individuals and families to return to work or school and overcome the inequality and exclusion that blindness and vision impairment often perpetuates.

Papua New Guinea (PNG) has one of the worst recorded rates of avoidable blindness in the world. Recent studies have revealed the magnitude of the problem, particularly in remote areas. A significantly greater proportion of females are affected compared to males, and untreated cataract is the most common cause.

Summary of Recommendations:

The Foundation recommends two priority projects for the Australian Government to address avoidable blindness and vision loss specifically in Papua New Guinea. As cataract is the most common cause of avoidable blindness, eye surgery by trained professionals will be required to restore vision. The targeted initiatives aim to address economic and social disadvantage, infrastructure deficits, and contribute to the development of local workforce and strong recognition of the importance of education. The proposals put forward are comprehensive: they are designed to address immediate service delivery gaps and to provide the longer-term health systems strengthening required to deliver sustainability to the PNG health system.

Proposal 1: Build an Eye Health Training Academy in Papua New Guinea (PNG)

The Australian Government to match funding of the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade to establish an Eye Health Training Academy in PNG. This facility would train doctors and nurses from across the country in comprehensive eye care and support outreach activities to the remote regions of PNG.	\$15.75 million Delivered over 5 years to match NZ
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<p>Meets the needs of Australia’s <i>Pacific Step-up</i> and New Zealand’s <i>Pacific Reset</i> policies.</p> <p>Leverages The Foundation’s success in establishing similar facilities in the Pacific Region (Fiji, Solomon Islands and Madang, PNG) and delivering services in complicated nations in collaboration with Government partners.</p>	Government funding
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Proposal 2: Expand eye health services into rural and regional areas of PNG

<p>The Australian Government to fund an outreach model program to access remote and hard to access communities with eye health care, as well as investigating and testing options for scaling up Diabetic Retinopathy services.</p> <p>Aligns with planned PNG Australia Transition to Health (PATH) Program.</p>	\$22.01 million spread over 5 years
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Proposal 3: Establish a Friends of the Pacific Eye Initiative

The third project can be initiated broadly in countries across the Pacific Region. Sufferers of avoidable blindness remain untreated across the region, without hope of access to the vision-restoring surgery or assistance required. Every person helped by this proposed initiative will be able to actively contribute to their family and community in ways not possible when incapacitated by blindness.

<p>The Australian Government to fund a partnership with The Fred Hollows Foundation and other Australian eye health organisations, such as Vision 2020 Australia and the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (RANZCO) to implement a program to eliminate the current cataract backlog in the Pacific.</p> <p>Building on decades of results and strong people-to-people connections, this consortium is able to address vision loss in disadvantaged communities in the Pacific Islands. With support from the Australian Government, Australia can play a leading role in tackling vision loss and blindness in our region.</p> <p>Aligns with The Australian Government’s role as a regional leader in stability.</p>	\$26.40 million spread over 4 years.
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AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT PACIFIC STEP-UP POLICY

Since announcing a ‘step-change’ in the way the Australian Government engages with the Pacific Region in 2016, the *Pacific Step-up* has become one of Australia’s highest foreign policy priorities.² The 2019 establishment of the Office of the Pacific within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), and allocation of \$1.4 billion in development assistance to the Pacific in 2019-20 are clear indicators of the Australian Government’s commitment to the policy at all levels.^{3 4}

“We are more than partners by choice. We are connected as members of a Pacific family...It’s time to open, I believe, a new chapter in relations with our Pacific family”.

– The Hon Scott Morrison MP, Prime Minister of Australia



During PNG Prime Minister Marape’s Guest of Government visit to Australia in July 2019, Prime Minister Scott Morrison hosted him at Shark Park to share their love and passion for NRL. Photo: @ScottMorrisonMP Twitter

“This is our neighbourhood; this is our backyard. These people are our family. And Australia has a shared destiny with the people of the Pacific.

And their prosperity will be our prosperity; their security is our security”.

– The Hon Alex Hawke MP, Minister for International Development and the Pacific

“Australia has long been the Pacific’s largest development partner, security partner and friend in time of need. This is a solid foundation, but our conversations in the Pacific over the past several years have made it clear that we can and should all do more together to rise to the challenge and opportunities of our new Blue Pacific Continent”.

– Senator the Hon Marise Payne, Minister for Foreign Affairs



Ministers attending the 27th PNG-Australia Ministerial Forum in Port Moresby. Photo: DFAT

² <https://dfat.gov.au/geo/pacific/engagement/Documents/stepping-up-australias-engagement-with-our-pacific-family.pdf> accessed 4 Dec 2019

³ <https://dfat.gov.au/geo/pacific/Pages/office-of-the-pacific.aspx> accessed 4 Dec 2019

⁴ <https://dfat.gov.au/geo/pacific/engagement/Pages/strengthening-our-pacific-partnerships.aspx> accessed 4 Dec 2019

“How we as a Government work can be as important as what we do. And an important element of the Office that I head is just that — how we work with the Pacific.”

– Ewen McDonald, Head of the Office of the Pacific

Pacific Step-up Infrastructure and Economic Growth

The Pacific region is the largest recipient of Australian aid yet continues to experience significant economic challenges with more than 20% of the population unable to meet their basic food and non-food needs. In the *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper*, the Coalition Government outlines the fundamental importance of stability and economic progress in the Pacific. The White Paper identifies governance and capacity constraints, infrastructure deficit and a rapidly growing population as some of the key challenges facing the region. The Government’s commitment to a Pacific Step-up, highlights the potential of the region to benefit from the global economic system through trade and investment.⁵

The Pacific Step-up aims to increase finance for business activity, deepen labour markets and create better quality employment opportunities. DFAT’s Pacific Labour Facility commenced in October 2018 to support the Pacific Labour Scheme and the Department of Jobs and Small Business led Seasonal Worker Programme initiatives, which connect Australian employers with Pacific workers.⁶



Eye Health, Economic Growth and healthy and resilient communities

‘Avoidable blindness’ is the term used to describe the four out of five blind people whose sight can be saved through prevention, surgery or treatment. In many cases, blindness can be corrected with a simple 20-minute procedure, immediately impacting on the life of the individual, their family and the wider community.

As people live longer and populations rise, the number of people who are blind is predicted to triple globally from 36 million in 2015 to 115 million over the next 30 years. The highest burden of eye disease is carried by low and middle-income countries, such as those in the Pacific Region⁷.

People who are vision impaired generally live in poorer socio-economic circumstances, have poor health related quality of life and as a result, are more likely to need support and assistance.⁸

- A global analysis found that eliminating avoidable blindness in low and middle-income countries could realise \$70 billion in economic benefits per year.⁹
- Eye health is fundamentally an economic issue, with every \$1 invested in eye health returning an average of \$4 to the local economy.¹⁰

⁵ <https://www.fpwhitepaper.gov.au/>, accessed 3 Dec 2019

⁶ <https://dfat.gov.au/geo/pacific/engagement/Documents/stepping-up-australias-pacific-engagement-labour-facility.pdf>, accessed 4 Dec 2019

⁷ Bourne RRA, Flaxman SR, Braithwaite T et al. Magnitude, temporal trends, and projections of the global prevalence of blindness and distance and near vision impairment: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Lancet Global Health* 2017;5: e888-97

⁸ IAPB Vision Atlas, GBVI – Regional Summaries available at: <http://atlas.iapb.org/global-burden-vision-impairment/regional-summaries>

⁹ PWC. Investing in vision. Comparing the costs and benefits of eliminating avoidable blindness and visual impairment. 2013

¹⁰ Ibid.

- Studies show that just six years after having their sight restored, people sustain improvements to their financial situation and quality of life.¹¹ Improving eye health across the globe helps eradicate poverty, reduces inequality and fosters economic prosperity.

Avoidable blindness in the Pacific undermines an individual's ability to participate in the workforce and education system, impacting economic development. Restoring sight allows individuals and families to return to work or school and overcome the inequality and exclusion that blindness and vision impairment often perpetuates.

The *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper* specifically highlights the increasing threat of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). NCDs account for up to three quarters of all adult deaths in the region.¹² Diabetes is the biggest health concern in the working age population, with prevalence increasing rapidly in middle and low-income countries. The Pacific Islands have the highest rates of diabetes in the world, with indicators predicting this will become an even greater health challenge in the Pacific in coming years.¹³

¹¹ Danquah L, Kuper H, Eusbeio C, et al. (2014). The long term impact of cataract surgery on quality of life, activities and poverty: Results from a six year longitudinal study in Bangladesh and the Philippines. PLoS One 9, e94140.

¹² Achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Pacific <https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Achieving%20the%202030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20in%20the%20Pacific.pdf> p. 3

¹³ World Bank, NCD Roadmap Report, July 2014, p. 7

The Fred Hollows Foundation and the Pacific Step-up

The Foundation has been active in the Pacific Region since its inception almost 30 years ago, reducing avoidable blindness and vision impairment by increasing access to high-quality and affordable eye care through a skilled and locally-led workforce. Throughout 2018, 5,915 people were screened and 2,226 eye operations and treatments were performed in the region, including 2,208 diabetic retinopathy treatments. For trachoma treatment, 95,448 doses of antibiotics were distributed.

The Foundation is well placed to assist with The Australian Government's recognition of their regional leadership and responsibility to support our closest neighbours.

Track Record

The Fred Hollows Foundation in collaboration with the New Zealand Government has successfully established models of the Pacific Eye Institute in Fiji, the Regional Eye Centre in Solomon Islands (Honiara), and the eye nurse training program in Madang, PNG. All three institutes operate within the existing public health and education systems of each country, demonstrating The Foundation's ability to deliver new health infrastructure and training projects in the Pacific on time and on budget. To date, the Foundation has trained 14 ophthalmologists and 131 eye nurses across the South Pacific through these institutes.

Through the previous Australian Government funded Avoidable Blindness Initiative (ABI), The Foundation was a major service delivery partner across the Asia-Pacific region. This program helped to solidify Australia's reputation as a leader in vision loss programs for development outcomes and cemented The Fred Hollows Foundation as a trusted partner in the region.

Grant Administration

The Fred Hollows Foundation is proud of our Australian heritage and over the last 27 years has grown into an international development organisation, working with multiple funding partners. This has included significant funding partnerships not only with the Australian Government, but with partners like USAID and DFID in the United Kingdom. Over the last five years, we have delivered more than \$30 million in projects with these partners. The Foundation will continue to work with these partners to deliver on multimillion dollar, multiyear contracts in countries as diverse as Ethiopia and Pakistan.

The Foundation has also worked to deliver programs with significant global funders like the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust, Standard Chartered Bank (SCB), The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, The End Fund, The Wellcome Trust and The Commonwealth Fund.

The Foundation is an experienced administrator of grants from Government and aid organisations. Involvement in projects at this level globally by an Australian-based organisation is possible due to the high levels of education and expertise available in the Australian workforce.

Governance

The Fred Hollows Foundation is a member of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and is a committed signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct - a voluntary, self-regulatory sector code of good practice. The Code requires members to meet high standards of corporate governance, public accountability and financial management.

According to a global indicator of public sector corruption, the 2018 Corruption Perceptions Index¹⁴, many of the countries where The Foundation works are highly sensitive to corrupt behaviours. The Foundation's approach to local partnership and training has enabled successful navigation through these environments to implement projects and deliver results.

Women and Girls - Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

The Foundation welcomes the Australian Government's commitment to women and girls as a cross-cutting issue in the *Pacific Step-up*. Similarly, The Foundation looks to incorporate a gender equity approach to all programming to ensure equal access to services for women, men, girls and boys. The Foundation has developed targeted approaches to reach women for eye health care, as well as integrating gender equity into existing activities. Preventing and treating blindness in women protects their productivity and dignity. Evidence shows that restoring eyesight returns people to the workforce, boosts household income and improves their quality of life for the long term.¹⁵ Women's equality in eye care is fundamental to women's equality in life.

Government Partnerships

Whilst aligning with Australia's foreign policy, these policy recommendations also align with the broader priorities of governments across the Pacific. Several have made an important commitment to eye health through the development and implementation of a National Eye Health Plan. These plans in countries like Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Kiribati and Fiji, commit government resources to ensure everybody has access to eye health care. The plans are based on the foundational pillars of effective eye health systems from the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (<https://www.iapb.org/>), including principles like building a sustainable workforce and addressing a lack of infrastructure.

New Zealand

Australia is not alone in engaging with our Pacific neighbours. In 2018, New Zealand initiated a *Pacific Reset Policy*¹⁶ to completely re-shape its aid and investment activity in the region.

PNG is New Zealand's second largest goods export market in the Pacific after Fiji. The PNG Medium-Term Development Plan III 2018-2022¹⁷ prioritises investment in economic sectors and infrastructure, health, education, law and justice.¹⁸

New Zealand aims to work with PNG in these priority areas, as well as collaborate with regional and multilateral partners such as Australia.

¹⁴ <https://www.transparency.org/cpi2018>, accessed 3 December 2019

¹⁵ Danquah, L, Polack, S and Kuper, H. The Cataract Impact Study: Six Year Follow Up Summary Report. s.l. : International Centre for Eye Health, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, 2013.

¹⁶ <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/assets/OIAR-R-The-Pacific-reset-The-First-Year.PDF> accessed 4 Dec 2019

¹⁷ http://www.planning.gov.pg/images/dnpm/pdf/latest_pub/MTDP%20III%20Vol1-%20Web-compressed.pdf accessed 4 Dec 2019

¹⁸ <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/countries-and-regions/pacific/papua-new-guinea/> accessed 4 Dec 2019

Papua New Guinea

The Foundation has been working in PNG specifically since 2003, with the overarching goal of ensuring the people of PNG have access to high quality eye care provided by skilled local eye care personnel working in a supportive, sustainable healthcare environment. This work has been achieved jointly with implementing partners: The National Department of Health Papua New Guinea; PNG Eye Care Inc. and the National Prevention of Blindness Committee Papua New Guinea. The Foundation enjoys a productive working relationship with the Government of PNG who recognise that increasing access and availability of eye health services for local communities contributes to the security, stability and prosperity of the nation.

The Need

PNG continues to face serious development challenges. In a population of about 8 million, 40% of Papua New Guineans are under the age of 15. With an annual population growth rate of 3.1%, the population is projected to reach 15 million by 2050. Despite the great need, the delivery of services is suffering because of a shortage of capacity and a constrained budget. This is true across sectors, and especially in health.

Long-term strategies for sustainable workforce growth must be developed for this rapidly increasing population to have access to vital services. These strategies must also address ways to expand services to the 87% of the population spread across rural areas.

Reflecting the proximity and close historical ties, PNG is Australia's largest development partner, with Australia investing around \$550 million a year in assistance. The Australian and PNG Governments work together to encourage economic growth, improve governance, and support health and education. These efforts could be enhanced if the significant eye health need is addressed.

Eye Health

PNG has one of the worst recorded rates of avoidable blindness in the world. A significantly greater proportion of females are affected compared to males, and untreated cataract is the most common cause.¹⁹

Prior to 2017 there was a lack of national data on the prevalence of avoidable blindness in PNG, largely due to inaccessibility and instability, making accurate assessments difficult to conduct. Therefore, the completion of PNG's first Rapid Assessment of Avoidable Blindness (RAAB) was a milestone, which unfortunately produced some concerning results. The RAAB showed that 5.6% of the population over 50 years of age are blind - the highest rate in the Pacific and one of the highest rates in the world. By comparison, the rate in neighbouring Pacific countries is estimated between 1% and 3%. In Australia, the prevalence of blindness is 0.12% in non-indigenous Australians compared to 0.36% in indigenous Australians. It is estimated that in PNG, 40,000 people are blind in both eyes and almost 70,000 are blind in one eye. Over 90% of the blindness in PNG is avoidable. The main cause is untreated cataract, accounting for 89% of all blindness.

¹⁹ Brien Holden Vision Institute. Rapid Assessment of Avoidable Blindness and Diabetic Retinopathy Report. Papua New Guinea 2017. Available at: https://www.iapb.org/wp-content/uploads/PNG_RAAB_FHF_Report_Complete.pdf

These high rates of blindness are in large part due to a very low ophthalmologist to population ratio, causing one of the lowest cataract surgical rates in the world. There is a critical shortage of eye doctors and nurses in PNG. Currently, there are only 14 ophthalmologists despite PNG needing over 80 to meet the eye care needs of the population.

Existing facilities to train ophthalmologists and ophthalmic clinicians are inadequate to meet the current and future demand for eye care services, and a growing population adds additional pressure. The burden of disease in PNG is high across all regions, but particularly in the Highlands region, and especially for women.

As in other Pacific Island countries and territories, PNG faces a double burden of disease with both communicable and non-communicable diseases (NCDs) having widespread effects.

Whilst there is no formal register on diabetes in PNG presently, the 2017 RAAB revealed that in the National Capital District alone, 8.1% of all adults aged 50 years or older had diabetes. Of these almost half had some form of Diabetic Retinopathy (DR) – a blinding complication of diabetes – or maculopathy, which is higher than the global average. As more people are diabetic for longer durations with poor control of risk factors, the prevalence of DR and other diabetes complications is expected to increase. Presently, services to address these complications are extremely limited.

Improving Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

In PNG in particular, it is important to address the gender gap, with the recent RAAB highlighting the prevalence of blindness as significantly higher in women at 7%, than men at 4.4%. A Gender and Development approach will be taken to integrate gender equality and women's empowerment in the activity design and overall PNG programming. Specifically, The Foundation's proposed Eye Health Training Academy is designed to be a safe space for women and girls. Women will be encouraged to take on leadership roles at the Academy in management and clinical service provision, and are expected to make up a significant percentage of the student/graduate body at all levels of the training. Routine gender disaggregation of clinic data will also be undertaken to help inform programs and service planning, working towards equity of access to services. The Foundation also considers it a priority to ensure women have equal access to training and professional development opportunities in eye care.

Australian Government programs in PNG

PNG is Australia's nearest neighbour and largest aid recipient. The Australian Government's approach is moving towards helping PNG use its own financial and human resources in the health sector to achieve more effective, efficient, equitable and sustainable outcomes. The draft *PNG Australia Transition to Health (PATH) Program* advocates to target support in alignment with the Government of PNG health goals and the DFAT PNG Health Sector Portfolio Plan 2018-23.

The Government of PNG's National Medium-Term Development Plan III (MTDP III), links in with the National Development Strategic Plan, Vision 2050, the National Health Plan and the drafted National Eye Health Plan. The PNG Government has committed to investing in health infrastructure, improving the quality of basic primary care, upgrading hospitals, and increasing access to higher learning institutions to grow the health workforce.

Budget Priorities for 2020-21

Proposal 1: Build an Eye Health Training Academy in PNG

Affected Agencies: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Office of the Pacific

Financial Implications:

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Total
Cost of proposal (\$ million)	1.15	7.7	3.5	1.6	1.80	15.75

Outline of Proposal

The Foundation is committed to significant expansion of its training and clinical service provision in PNG through a new, purpose-built, Eye Health Training Academy to be located in Port Moresby. The Foundation has the support of the National Department of Health (NDOH), the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG), Port Moresby General Hospital (PMGH), and other key eye care and health sector stakeholders for this significant undertaking.

The Foundation will investigate and test options to scale up diabetic eye disease services in PNG, including intensive training courses for eye workers, primary eye care and diabetes courses for community and village health workers, screening and treatment outreaches, and investment in essential equipment.

Future management of the Eye Health Training Academy will be undertaken as a strategic collaboration with PMGH, UPNG and other key stakeholders. Doctors and nurses will be trained side-by-side as eye care specialists before being deployed across PNG to regional hospitals and health facilities as skilled ophthalmologists and ophthalmic clinicians.

The Eye Health Training Academy will provide space for consultations, refraction and surgery, become a central base for the local eye care team to conduct outreaches to rural provinces, and provide patient-centred screening and counselling for the eye-related complications of a leading non-communicable disease - diabetes.

In time, the Eye Health Training Academy will provide high-quality, year-round, training; acting as a service provision facility directly addressing the issues identified by the PNG Government as barriers to effective health service delivery, including inadequate infrastructure and a shortage of skilled human resources.

Implementation and Governance

The Eye Health Training Academy proposal specifically draws from The Fred Hollows Foundation's successful models of the Pacific Eye Institute in Fiji, the Regional Eye Centre in Solomon Islands (Honiara), and the eye nurse training program in Madang, PNG. All three institutes operate within the

existing public health and education systems of each country and demonstrate the proven capability of The Foundation to deliver new health infrastructure and training projects in the Pacific on time and on budget. To date, the Foundation has trained 11 ophthalmologists and 131 eye nurses across the South Pacific through these institutes.

Importantly, the development of the Eye Health Training Academy aligns with PNG's strategic priorities, with the Government recognising that ineffective health service delivery is a barrier to sustainable development. Effective health services are limited by the availability of suitable health infrastructure and a shortage of skilled human resources.

Impact

Funding a Training Academy in PNG will provide an effective and sustainable solution to the lack of skilled ophthalmologists by scaling up eye health worker training, and ultimately increasing access to high quality eye care services for people across the country.

Developing the capacity of PNG-based eye care workers further strengthens the human resources available to communities across the Pacific. Many Pacific Island Countries are too small to have extensive ophthalmic expertise in-country and rely on the collective network across the Pacific, which the PNG Training Academy would support.

Through this investment, a state-of-the-art Eye Health Training Academy will be constructed and equipped by 2021. As a result, the following long-term outcomes will be reached:

- Ophthalmologists and eye nurses from every province in PNG will be trained through internationally accredited postgraduate courses to provide comprehensive eye care services;
- Targeted outreaches will provide sight-restoring surgeries to rural populations;
- The quality and calibre of eye care worker training and service provision across PNG will significantly improve;
- The backlog of cataract will be reduced and sustainably managed through skilled local human resources;
- The burden of moderate to severe vision impairment will be reduced and sustainably managed; and
- The Australian Government will directly contribute to goals set out in PNG's National Development Plan.

Cost

The total cost of the feasibility study, build and operating costs for the first five years of the Eye Health Training Academy is AU\$32 million.

The Foundation is currently working with the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade to develop a proposal valued at approximately AU\$15.75m for first phases of construction of the facility. This significant potential investment from MFAT recognises the importance of PNG's sustainable development in the region.

Through matched funding from the Australian Government of AU \$15.75m based on milestone achievements over five years, the Eye Health Training Academy could be completed and supported for the first five years of its life.

Proposal 2: Delivering services in PNG

Affected Agencies: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Office of the Pacific

Financial Implications:

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Total
Cost of proposal (\$ million)	2.40	5.26	4.65	4.80	4.90	22.01

Outline of Proposal

The Foundation has an opportunity to step-up its efforts in PNG, building on 15 years of experience and achievements. The overall goal is to reduce avoidable blindness and vision impairment in PNG, with the following three long-term outcomes:

1. Improved access to quality, comprehensive eye care;
2. Improved quality of ophthalmology, eye nurse and allied health personnel training; and
3. Supplemented access to high-quality NCD complication preventative and mitigation care.

Specifically, the approach taken to expand the PNG Program will be multifaceted, with some new activities already underway or planned for 2020 based on a traditional service delivery model, and others requiring a longer timeline. These activities include:

1. Establishing the Eye Health Training Academy in Port Moresby as a national training and service delivery hub;
2. Scaling up the national outreach program to reach more people through surgical outreaches;
3. Building the national workforce support program, ensuring the eye health workforce across PNG have the skills and equipment to do their jobs; and
4. Strengthening the national Diabetic Retinopathy referral system to ensure people with diabetes have increased access to sight-saving interventions.

Implementation and Governance

The establishment of a suitable training and service provision facility is essential to achieving long-term outcomes, with support for the Eye Health Training Academy (Proposal 1) central to overall success. Not only will the Eye Health Training Academy service year-round training of ophthalmologists and eye nurses, it will also provide a base from which to scale up national workforce support programs and outreach services. Furthermore, the Eye Health Training Academy will undertake surgical procedures, operations and medical eye cases that cannot be managed at the provincial level.

The Foundation will work with implementation partners to ensure enough eye nurses, doctors and administrative staff are trained, employed and supported to ensure the success of the Eye Health Training Academy, enabling a significant, long-term lift in access to quality and comprehensive eye care in PNG. Critical to its success is a suitably qualified teaching faculty. In PNG, there are currently only 14

qualified ophthalmologists who should not be drawn away from their clinics. Suitably qualified staff will need to be identified and employed for the teaching posts.

The Foundation will establish systems and processes for financial management, consumable and equipment procurement, patient records, and IT systems, and provide training to administrative staff.

In relation to service delivery, The Foundation will significantly scale-up its national outreach program by deploying outreach teams from the Eye Health Training Academy in Port Moresby, a Foundation-managed eye clinic in Madang, and the Pacific Outreach Team based in Suva, Fiji. With coordination support from both the main centres and the 80 qualified eye nurses already in place across the country, outreaches will run efficiently and effectively.

Regular workforce support is critical for maintaining effective service delivery in PNG as many eye care providers work in isolated, rural environments. The Foundation will expand its existing workforce support program to include all eye doctors and nurses from across PNG to ensure they have access to essential equipment and that their skills remain up to date.

The burden of diabetes and associated complications such as blindness and vision loss are rising in PNG, however, services to address DR in the country are currently extremely limited. The Foundation will investigate and test options to scale-up DR services in PNG including intensive training courses for eye workers, primary eye care and diabetes courses for community and village health workers, screening and treatment outreaches, and investment in essential equipment.

Impact

- 12 surgical Outreaches delivered per year, with 100-200 cataract surgeries conducted per outreach;
- 80 qualified eye nurses and 16 ophthalmologists from across the country will have access to the essential equipment and support required to do their jobs; and
- People with diabetes will have increased access to sight-saving interventions.

Cost

Total cost for five years: AUD \$22,010,000.

Note that if Proposals 1 and 2 are accepted these costs will be reduced.

Proposal 3: Friends of the Pacific Eye Initiative

Affected Agencies: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Office of the Pacific

Financial Implications:

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	Total
Cost of proposal (\$ million)	3.3	6.0	9.0	8.0	26.3

Outline of Proposal

The vision sector in Australia has always had a clear focus on helping the most disadvantaged in our region. Through the *Vision 2020 – Right to Sight*²⁰ coalition, vision organisations have contributed to significant reductions in the prevalence of blindness across the Pacific region. Our focus remains resolute on preventable and treatable diseases including cataract, trachoma and DR, the provision of local training and affordable technology and vital research to improve the understanding of avoidable blindness.

While the prevalence of avoidable visual impairment was once declining, the impact of the rapid increase in global population, combined with an ageing population, has resulted in a significant projected increase in the number of people who are blind or have a moderate to severe vision impairment from cataracts.

This makes tackling the current backlog of patients with blindness and severe forms of visual impairment critical.

Latest estimates on the prevalence of blindness and most severe cases of visual impairment believe there to be more than 300,000 people across the Pacific in need of assistance.

Working with PWC, The Fred Hollows Foundation has for the first time modelled a unit cost for addressing the backlog of the most severe cases. As a per unit cost to address these cases, a total of more than \$26 million would be required to provide surgical treatment and immediate costs of consumables. While this unit cost analysis does not reveal the true cost of reaching every patient in need, for the first time we have a measure for tackling the immediate priority cases of blindness and vision loss across the Pacific Islands.

The creation of a *Friends of the Pacific Eye Initiative* would provide the necessary funding for non-government organisations to start delivering critical screenings and surgeries to those most in need. It would also be a source for further health systems strengthening work, like training primary health workers, nurses and ophthalmologists to deliver sustainability for the years ahead. It could assist with providing critical equipment for health facilities across the Pacific Islands.

Implementation and Governance

This initiative builds on previous, bipartisan, government programs like the *Avoidable Blindness Initiative (ABI)* which delivered eye health services across South East Asia and the Pacific.

²⁰ [Vision 2020 The Right To Sight](#).

The Avoidable Blindness Initiative was an important and significant Australian partnership aimed at eliminating avoidable blindness and reducing the impact of vision loss in the Asia Pacific, resulting from a \$45 million policy funding commitment by the Australian Government in 2008. Of this funding, almost half was implemented through the Vision 2020 Australia Global Consortium, of which the Foundation played a leading role as the prime contract holder with DFAT. The Consortium members worked alongside governments and local health services to deliver better aid outcomes on the ground and strong local community ownership. Additionally, the Australian Government in conjunction with the New Zealand Government, previously funded the *Pacific Regional Blindness Prevention Program (PRBPP)*. This significant bilateral funding scheme provided training and workforce development programs based out of Suva, Fiji, for the benefit of Pacific nations. It also provided support for community education, research and clinical leadership programs. This proposal builds on both previous Australian Government initiatives.

Impact

Although less targeted than the previous two proposals, a *Friends of the Pacific Eye Initiative* enables the Australian Government to have immediate impact across the Pacific. It would:

- Reduce the immediate backlog of cataract cases to ensure services can be sustainably managed by the local health system;
- Strengthen health systems across the Pacific with investments in training, equipment and health facilities;
- Help some of the world's most vulnerable people, specifically those living in poverty and with disabilities and those who experience significant barriers to health services like these;
- Invest in drivers of economic growth in the Pacific, providing scope for increased trade and strengthened relations;
- Serve Australia's national interests and reflect the spirit of its people; and
- Have a direct development impact through individual, measurable surgical outcomes that clearly demonstrate value for money in the foreign aid program and drive more integrated local services.

Cost

With funding of \$26,300,000 over five years to a *Friends of the Pacific Eye Initiative*, the Australian Government can:

- Deliver services to help eliminate the cataract backlog, ensuring services can be sustainably managed by the local health systems;
- Scale-up treatment for moderate to severe vision impairment in Pacific Island Countries; and²¹
- Provide critical investment in equipment and training that can contribute to greater sustainability.

Note that this amount is contingent on Proposal 3 as a stand-alone project. If all 3 proposals are accepted, then the funds in Proposal 2 will contribute to this project and reduce the total required.

²¹ Note: Costing reflects surgical and immediate costs, as well as a contribution to the overhead costs – like equipment depreciation and hospital running costs – associated with surgery. They do not reflect broader health systems costs or monitoring and evaluation costs.

CONCLUSION

Good vision is foundational. Without it, functioning in most aspects of economic, occupational, educational and familial life can be more difficult and even impossible. The impact of vision loss is exacerbated by social and economic disadvantage.

As a trusted partner of the Australian Government, The Fred Hollows Foundation is well placed to deliver on the unmet need in eye health in the Pacific Family of countries and contribute to the intent of the *Pacific Step-up* Policy.

We look forward to working with the Australian Government to deliver these proposals and help our Pacific family meet the challenge of avoidable blindness and vision loss.



**The Fred Hollows
Foundation**

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