

The Vision Van is on the Road

In an Australia-first community initiative, a mobile screening unit, known as the Vision Van, will travel around regional Australia screening specifically for MD. The Vision Van will be equipped with state-of-the-art optometry facilities and will offer free screening for MD to people aged 50 years and over.

Over a 90 day period the screening unit will travel over 14,000km and visit 37 towns. The itinerary will cover a broad territory including Gosford, Cairns, Adelaide and Perth.

A qualified optometrist will be on board to perform macula checks in just 15 minutes. Approximately 2,000 eyes will be screened in the Vision Van, which has the potential to make thousands of Australians more aware of MD and the importance of regular macula checks.



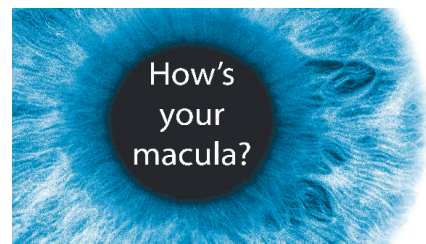
This project is a Novartis initiative and is supported by the MD Foundation, Optometrists Association Australia and the Royal Australian College of Ophthalmologists.

For bookings call the special Vision Van hotline on **1800 176 255**



Did you know?

If you currently live in, or are planning to move into, a retirement village you may be eligible for rental assistance. For more information call the Centrelink Retirement Services on **13 2300** or visit **www.centrelink.gov.au**.



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How can I make a Donation?

As a charity, the MD Foundation relies on donations, bequests and sponsorship to fund its operations. A donation slip and reply paid envelope is included with this newsletter for your convenience. The Foundation thanks contributors for their ongoing support. You can now make a donation to the MD Foundation online using your credit card. This secure method of payment allows you to instantly make a donation at a convenient time for you, any time of the year. For tax purposes, a receipt will be e-mailed to you on payment. And remember - all donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

From the CEO

I continue to say in all sincerity that the growth of the Foundation and the work we do is because of the support that you give to the Foundation. I am constantly reminded each day of the impact of this disease on quality of life and independence and the ongoing courage of those with MD, their carers and family. Please be assured that we will continue in the next year and beyond to do everything we can to fulfil our mission to reduce the incidence and impact of this disease in Australia.

Our Foundation is relatively young (7 years) compared to many charities so we have had a big challenge in a short time to begin to make inroads into all facets of this disease. I have a real sense that we are starting to make an impact, that awareness of MD is increasing and that our MD community is beginning to receive the support it so rightly deserves.

Following is an overview of some of the work we have completed, and some of the exciting initiatives we will be undertaking in the near future. Once again, many thanks for your continued support.

Julie Heraghty
CEO



Julie Heraghty

Highlights of some exciting projects in 2008/09:

- As a result of our successful pilot in Adelaide and Newcastle there will be a major national TV campaign along with major print advertising and special projects to increase awareness.
- An expanded education program across Australia.
- Production of the third in our series of guides *Low Vision Aids & Technology – A Guide*.
- A focus on professional education including GPs, Pharmacies and Students.

Highlights of 2007/08 financial year

Education

Across the country 8,739 people (20% more than last year) attended 221 education sessions on MD.

Our educators went to regional and city communities and focused on retirement villages. As a result of our grant from the Department of Veterans Affairs, the doors were opened to our Veteran Community and we met wonderful people at RSL venues who welcomed the opportunity to learn about the disease and heard the critical message on early detection. Our community education sessions through clubs such as Probus and Inner Wheel grew dramatically.

For the first time our key publications became available in 5 languages – Arabic, Chinese, Greek, Italian and Vietnamese – and we were warmly welcomed into these communities to spread the word on MD.

Awareness

Along with our highly successful 2008 MD Awareness Week campaign in May, we also undertook our first ever paid TV advertising campaign “How’s Your Macula?” in April. The campaign was a pilot trialled in the Adelaide (SA) and Newcastle (NSW) areas.

Each region aired the MD Foundation’s advertisement during prime time TV. Both optometrists and our MD community when surveyed rated the project as highly successful, were overwhelmingly positive about the advertising and wished to see the advertising continued.

We also had a presence at numerous expos

such as retirement and lifestyle exhibitions, optometry expos, garden shows, fish markets, shopping centres, Royal Easter Shows and seniors events.

Support Services

We continued to ensure the information provided via our phone support, website and publications was of the highest standard. The launch of *Family, Friend & Carer - A Guide* was a great step forward in supporting those who support others. Our new updated AMD booklet and Amsler Grid have also been very popular and our Navigator Library Access Project (NLAP), in partnership with local libraries in NSW, has been a remarkable journey for those with MD.



Invitation to the MDF Annual General Meeting

Time: 10.00am – 11.00am

Date: 19 November 2008

Where: City Tattersalls Club
Sydney Room (2nd Floor)
194-204 Pitt Street, Sydney

Getting There: The nearest cross street is Market Street and the nearest rail station is St James.

Note: Morning tea will be served.

RSVP is essential – by Thursday 6 November - phone **1800 111 709**

The Home Internet Connection

Did you know that some people are eligible for a higher rate of Telephone Allowance for a home internet connection?

Who is eligible?

The higher rate is payable to income support recipients of age pensionage, including Veteran Affairs pensioners, CSHC (Commonwealth Seniors Health Card) holders and recipients of Disability Support Pension and Carer Payment. If you are eligible you receive a 50% increase in telephone allowance from \$88 to \$132 per household. For more information contact Centrelink

The Mobile Phone

There are two main options for accessing mobile phones if you have serious vision impairment. Which option suits you will depend on what you want to do with the phone and how much you are prepared to spend.

1. You want a mobile phone to just make and receive calls

Get a basic mobile phone with tactile (easy to feel) buttons that has a speed dial feature. Consider a clam shell style phone that can be set to answer a call when you open it and hang up when you close it.

Generally the phone text will be too small for the vision impaired so the idea is that you operate the phone purely by touch. You may need some sighted assistance initially to store commonly dialled numbers. Suitable phones are often at the cheaper end of the scale with most companies offering at least one model with easy to feel keys.



2. You want access to all the phone features

This option involves running special software on your phone that provides speech output and/or magnification. There are a limited range of phones on which this type of software can be installed with prices starting from around \$300. The software (there are two competing products Talks/Zooms and MobileSpeak/MobileMagnifier) costs around \$320. Although it requires time to learn to use all the features of the phone this can be very effective.

User friendly tip: Capture the amazing technological knowledge of a young person – they may revel in showing you their skills and take on the project and help you. Of course Foundation staff are also only too pleased to talk to you.

Upcoming Education Sessions

The Foundation will be conducting the following education sessions. If you would like to attend please call the Foundation for details - **1800 111 709**.

16 October, 1.30pm	Maroochydore, QLD
17 October, 9.30am	Beenleigh, QLD
17 October, 1.30pm	Underwood, QLD
21 October, 10am	Noosa, QLD
23 October, 10am	Bundaberg, QLD
6 November, 10am	Cairns, QLD
7 November, 10am	Holroyd, Sydney