



# The Centre for Eye Health

A future with vision for  
Papua New Guinea

To restore more than sight, we need to do even more than surgery. That's why we're building a new Centre for Eye Health in Papua New Guinea.



The **Fred Hollows**  
Foundation NZ

# Your opportunity to invest in the future of eye health in Papua New Guinea.

The Fred Hollows Foundation NZ has been working in Papua New Guinea for more than 20 years to help eliminate avoidable blindness and vision impairment.

Now, we are looking to the future. We are building a brand-new Centre for Eye Health (the Centre) in Port Moresby. And we invite you to be part of this life-changing project.

The Centre will form the pillar of eye health services in Papua New Guinea. It will deliver and support specialist eye care training for eye doctors, nurses and optometrists.

Opening in 2026, the Centre will be dedicated to strengthening the local eye health care systems to be inclusive and equitable, reducing the barriers to accessing eye care services and improving eye health right across the country.

**Join us in building a better future for the people of Papua New Guinea. A future with vision.**

## The Papua New Guinea Country Programme

The Foundation's Papua New Guinea Eye Health System Strengthening Programme was developed in partnership with the country's National Department of Health, provincial health authorities, and Prevention of Blindness Committee.

The programme supports the vision of the National Eye Health Strategic Plan to increase the availability of integrated, people-centred eye care for all Papua New Guineans.

The Foundation operates from two locations, Madang and Port Moresby, where our focus is on training eye doctors and nurses. We work in partnership with Divine Word University to offer the country's only training programme for eye nurses. We continue to provide support post-qualification through mentoring and further training.

We support the Madang Provincial Hospital Eye Clinic in Madang Province, which provides comprehensive eye care services for communities. Each year around 5,000 eye consultations and 500 sight-restoring surgeries are performed through outreaches to rural areas, helping to provide vital eye services countrywide.

The Foundation also supports national and provincial leadership in the development of eye health policies and plans, including the role of a National Eye Care Coordinator who supports national eye care leadership. Over time, this will lead to an increased focus on eye care in Papua New Guinea, with more funding and resources allocated for eye care and better systems to track and measure eye care outcomes.

### 2024 in focus: The Papua New Guinea Programme's achievements



**1** eye doctor graduated with a Master of Medicine in Ophthalmology from the University of Papua New Guinea



**11** eye nurses graduated with an Advanced Diploma in Eye Care from Divine Word University.



**14,351** consultations provided.



**1,102** surgeries performed.



**2,740** pairs of glasses dispensed.



**33** screening and surgical outreaches were carried out in underserved areas.

We are incredibly proud of these achievements. But there is much more to do.



# The state of eye health in Papua New Guinea

Papua New Guinea has one of the highest rates of avoidable blindness and vision impairment in the world, and the highest known rate in the Pacific.

The country's leading causes of blindness and vision impairment are untreated cataract, uncorrected refractive error, and diabetic eye disease – and approximately 90% of this is treatable or preventable. **The current lack of services for diabetic eye disease means every person in Papua New Guinea with diabetes is at a high risk of vision loss.**

The country's health system is profoundly fragile. Deteriorating health infrastructure, inadequate investment, limited availability of medical supplies, insufficient health workers, and a high prevalence of poverty are significant ongoing challenges to delivering basic health services, including eye care. Currently, only seven provinces out of 22 have an eye doctor and demand for eye care cannot be met.

**Lack of sufficient eye health workers presents a major challenge for Papua New Guinea. With the country's population expected to exceed 21 million by 2050, pressure on the health system will rapidly grow, and the number of people needing eye care will significantly increase.**

**Papua New Guinea has one of the world's highest rates of avoidable blindness and vision impairment and almost 90% of all blindness the country is caused by cataract, which is treatable and preventable with cost-effective surgical intervention. The country also faces some of the most challenging development indicators in the world. More investment in the country's eye care health system is desperately needed.**

## Snapshot: Eye health inequality in Papua New Guinea

- Papua New Guinea has one of the world's highest reported rates of gender inequality in eye health care. A total of 61% of all blindness and vision impairment in the country is found in women – yet women are less likely to have glasses or receive cataract surgery.
- People living with a disability face challenges in accessing eye health care due to number of factors including the stigma associated with disabilities such as blindness and security concerns.
- Higher rates of blindness occur among rural and remote populations, most notably in the Highlands region, which has fewer eye care services per person than anywhere else in the country.



## The Centre for Eye Health, Port Moresby

The construction and development of the Centre for Eye Health in Port Moresby represents the culmination of our commitment to strengthen the local eye health care systems and ensure its long-term sustainability. It will provide high-quality training and ongoing support for more eye doctors, nurses and optometrists, as well as specialised eye care services.

The Centre will operate within the country's existing health system through strong leadership from key health stakeholders.

It will be located on the grounds of the University of Papua New Guinea School of Medicine and Health Sciences and the Port Moresby General Hospital.

The two-floor facility will include reception and administration areas, well-equipped surgical facilities, and educational, training and management facilities. The Centre will also provide specialised eye care services, which will include the country's first dedicated diabetic eye disease clinic and paediatric ophthalmology services.

## Better eye health across the country

Opening in 2026, the Centre will substantially support the delivery of high-quality, accessible eye care to people across Papua New Guinea.

We will work in close partnership with Provincial Health Authorities throughout the country to support the strengthening of nationwide eye health services, by increasing the eye care workforce throughout the provinces.

The Centre will also become a hub for the National Eye Care Coordinator, who will lead the development of the Centre's sustainability and partnership plan. It will provide cohesion in eye health service delivery and will be a space for sharing key messages around advocacy and health promotion, and guiding research and development.

## Advancing local expertise in eye health care

The Centre will significantly increase the country's capacity to train local eye doctors, nurses and optometrists:

- It will substantially contribute to the delivery of high-quality postgraduate training programmes via the Postgraduate Diploma in Ophthalmology and the Master of Medicine (Ophthalmology), with the aim of having two eye doctors graduating annually.
- It will train an additional 10 eye nurses per year in the Advanced Diploma in Eye Care (ADEC), doubling the annual number of eye nurse graduates in Papua New Guinea.
- It will attract specialist eye doctor lecturers from across the Pacific region.
- Consultations, treatments and surgeries will be provided to patients by trainee ophthalmologists and nurses, who will also practice their skills in countrywide screening and surgical outreaches.

The Centre for Eye Health moves Papua New Guinea one step closer to the goal of ensuring every province has one eye doctor and a team of eye nurses.

## A sustainable and climate-resilient facility

In line with our commitment to sustainability, the Centre has been designed for efficiency, climate resilience and well-being. Compared to a typical building, the Centre will require significantly less energy and have reduced CO2 output, through low-energy operation elements such as the incorporation of rooftop solar photovoltaic technology and battery storage.

This will mean the Centre will have its own energy source and will be less susceptible to power outages that cause frequent interruptions to surgery, putting patient's safety at risk.

Other sustainability features of the building include:

- low-flow sanitary fittings
- natural ventilation
- LED lighting
- external shading
- rainwater harvesting
- a heat pump for hot water.

These features not only increase the Centre's sustainability but will also reduce costs.

## Help us build a future with vision for Papua New Guinea

By partnering with us, you will help to fully realise an eye health centre that embeds sustainable, equitable and accessible eye care into the country's health system, now and into the future, improving the health and well-being of all Papua New Guineans.

The Centre is being funded with support from the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, The Fred Hollows Foundation in Australia and New Zealand and by our generous supporters.

We are grateful to our major partners for their role in funding the building of the Centre. However, we still need more\* to ensure the Centre is sustainable and fully equipped to deliver training, specialist care and outreach services to the people of Papua New Guinea.

Your investment in this life-changing project will support areas such as:

- the purchase of much-needed equipment for the training of eye health clinicians and the treatment of patients
- contributing to key personnel for the Centre, including nurses, ophthalmic clinicians, a teaching faculty head and a teaching eye doctor
- funding scholarships for student eye doctors and nurses and the continued upskilling of the eye health care workforce
- the purchase of essential surgical consumables that will enable eye surgeries to be conducted, including on children
- supporting outreaches to hard-to-reach parts of Papua New Guinea to ensure access to eye care for all.

\*Please speak to your relationship manager for specifics.



## “It’s a calling.”

Dr Alice is in her final year of Master of Medicine in Ophthalmology at the University of Papua New Guinea. For her, eye surgery is about much more than restoring sight.

“I believe it’s a calling for me, because of the joy I get when I encounter every patient that comes to me,” she says.

Although Alice loves the field, she admits there are currently difficulties.

“Starting with the smallest things, like consumables – we often run out of supplies,” she explains. “And sometimes it’s overwhelming because the doctor-to-patient ratio is too high. And there are a lot of increasing eye health problems.” But Alice is committed to Papua New Guinea’s eye care and hopes others will follow in her footsteps.

“I hope a lot of juniors choose this field, as it’s very rewarding. You get to bring change not only to one person, but to a family, a community. I get a bit emotional talking about it – it’s my passion.”



**The Centre for Eye Health in Port Moresby will address the urgent need for more eye care specialists and services in Papua New Guinea and will be central in helping the country tackle avoidable blindness and vision impairment. It will help ensure sustainable, equitable and accessible eye care across the country.**

**You can be part of creating real change. Invest today.**

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