



**The Hon Ken Wyatt AM, MP**  
**Minister for Aged Care**  
**Minister for Indigenous Health**  
**Member for Hasluck**

**Nicolle Flint MP**  
**Member for Boothby**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**Genetics Promise Personalised Treatment to Prevent Blindness**

The Turnbull Government has today invested \$9.46 million in genetics research aimed at preventing glaucoma blindness, through personalised treatments.

Minister for Aged Care and Minister for Indigenous Health, Ken Wyatt AM, said the \$9.4 million grant to Flinders University's College of Medicine and Public Health would help tackle the world's leading cause of irreversible blindness.

"The potential to personalise treatment through genetics is exciting because glaucoma already affects approximately 300,000 Australians, with up to 80 million predicted to suffer from the disease worldwide by 2020," Minister Wyatt said.

"It's long been known that a family history of glaucoma means increased risk but there are no symptoms or warning signs in the early stages.

"Testing is vital and, although there is no cure, with treatment glaucoma can be controlled and further loss of sight either prevented or slowed."

Glaucoma is a group of eye diseases in which the optic nerve at the back of the eye is slowly destroyed. In most people this damage is due to an increased pressure inside the eye as a result of a build-up of fluid.

Sight loss is usually gradual and a considerable amount of peripheral vision may be gone before people are aware of any problem.

Member for Boothby, Nicolle Flint MP, said the research grant would support the work of Flinders University Professor Jamie Craig along with three other key researchers: Prof David Mackey (University of Western Australia), A/Prof Stuart Macgregor (The Council of the Queensland Institute of Medical Research) and A/Prof Alex Hewitt (University of Tasmania).

"Eye and vision science is one of Flinders University's key strengths in both teaching and research," Ms Flint said.

“Professor Craig will examine new ways to diagnose and treat glaucoma, promising better outcomes for patients. Improved care will also result from better targeting of treatments and monitoring of low risk cases.

“Health and medical research is a powerful investment and one that delivers immense benefits to patients and to the economy.”

The annual economic cost of glaucoma in Australia has been estimated at more than \$144 million.

“Research based on knowledge of the genes that lead to glaucoma blindness will have important real-world impacts in reducing the worldwide suffering caused by this common condition,” Minister Wyatt said.

“Flinders has a long tradition of research and clinical practice of the highest standing, and this five-year grant will support work to make a positive difference by preventing blindness in patients across Australia and overseas.”

Funding for the grant has been provided through the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and continues the Turnbull Government’s commitment to Australia’s world-leading medical researchers.

Since 2007, the NHMRC has provided \$29.8 million to glaucoma research.

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