



LIONS AUSTRALIA

November 20, 2007

MEDIA ALERT INTERNATIONAL FORUM TO TACKLE PREVENTABLE BLINDNESS

Somewhere in the world a child goes blind every minute. Half-a-million will have lost their sight by the end of this year.

The issue of preventable blindness will be tackled at an upcoming International Lions Club Forum to be held in Sydney November 28-29. Hosted by Lions Australia, the two day think-tank involving Lions representatives from Australia, Indonesia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands will identify medical, humanitarian and research projects to be supported as part of the organisation's challenge to bring an end to needless loss of sight.

“Reducing preventable blindness is an organisation-wide, and almost a ‘century-long’ mission for Lions,” Lions Australia Executive Officer, Rob Oerlemans said.

“The inspirational Helen Keller challenged the Lions Service Club organisation in 1925 to become ‘Knights of the Blind in the Crusade against darkness’. Two years into our three-year fund raising program, Lions globally is close to raising more than US\$150 million to reduce preventable blindness around the world.”

“Australia is contributing strongly with 1400 Lions Clubs around Australia raising more than AU\$6.8 million towards this target”

“We’re pleased to announce the support of a number of international and Australian experts who will address the forum including Dr Silvio Mariotti, from the World Health Organisation.”

“Dr Mariotti is a Senior Ophthalmologist with the World Health Organisation Programme for the Prevention of Blindness & Deafness, Chronic Diseases Prevention and Management.

Others include:

- Dr. Jill Keffe, Associate Professor, Centre for Eye Research Australia, University of Melbourne
- Dr. Henry Newland - Director, Department of Ophthalmology, Royal Adelaide Hospital
- Dr. Richard Le Mesurier VISION 2020 Coordinator, Western Pacific Region
- Dr. Farida Sirlan, Cicendo Eye Hospital, Bandung, Indonesia

Lions, through its Campaign Sightfirst program in the 1990's has restored sight to 7.3 million people through cataract surgeries, prevented serious vision loss for 20 million people and improved eye care services for hundreds of millions.

“Just \$10 dollars can restore someone's vision or save them from river blindness so it's not a big ask to get behind this campaign,” Mr Oerlemans said.

Members of the public wishing to make a donation to Campaign Sightfirst II can contact Lions at 02 4940 8033. Every cent of your donation to Lions goes to charity.

MEMBERS OF THE MEDIA WISHING TO ATTEND SHOULD REGISTER BY CALLING ROB OERLEMANS ON 0409 778 044

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<http://www.lionsclubs.org.au>

About Lions Australia

Lions Clubs International is the world's largest service organisation with 1.5 million members in 45,000 clubs in 200 countries. Lions Australia is one of Australia's largest service organisations with almost 28,000 members and 1,400 clubs across Australia. Lions Australia raises over \$20 million per annum to assist in community and health projects, and funding for Lions foundations and programs.