Your Impact through Glaucoma New Zealand

1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025

GLAUCOMA NZ
TO SAVE SIGHT

Nā te rourou
nāku te rourou
ka ora ai te iwi

With your basket
and my basket
the people will thrive

GLAUCOMA NZ
TO SAVE SIGHT

Your 2024-25 Impact Report

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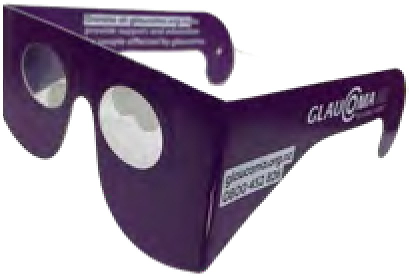

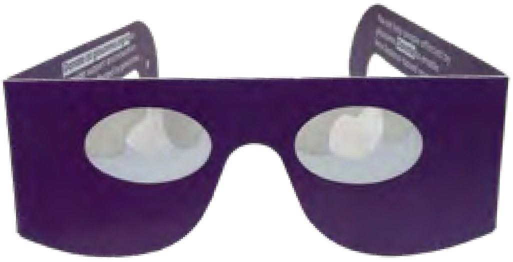

Your people, your service

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Services you make possible:

- Enhancing public awareness about glaucoma
- Supporting and informing people affected by glaucoma
- Educating eye health workers to assure high quality services
- Supporting NZ glaucoma research

The beginning: With you at its heart

Glaucoma NZ is a charitable trust that was founded in 2002. It began with a group of clinicians and advocates who saw too many New Zealanders losing their sight unnecessarily.

Today, its mission is simple and powerful: to eliminate blindness from glaucoma in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Patients, families and supporters like you shaped Glaucoma NZ. Through your questions, your experiences and your determination to take action, you helped build a charity that is practical, compassionate and focused on making change.

Professor Helen Danesh-Meyer is Chair of Glaucoma NZ and one of its founding trustees, reflects on those early days. Her memories speak to a journey that belongs to all of us.

Why did the founding trustees establish Glaucoma NZ (GNZ)?

Too many New Zealanders were walking around unaware they had glaucoma, until their vision was gone.

I remember one man who came in for his first eye check in years. It was after failing his driving test. He was convinced he just needed new glasses. Instead, we had to tell him he'd already lost a large part of his vision. And that it couldn't be restored. His shock, and the deep sadness on his wife's face, have stayed with me. Stories like his weren't rare.

Clinics were often so busy that there wasn't always the time to explore the deeper side of glaucoma. That included the fears, the family history, and the everyday challenges of living with it.

We imagined GNZ as the thread that could weave everyone together. The ophthalmologist, the optometrist, the GP, the pharmacist, the patient, and their whānau. Glaucoma needs that kind of collective effort.

Our vision was for GNZ to hold those strands together, so no one felt they had to carry glaucoma on their own.

What was the vision for GNZ, and how did you picture it making a difference?

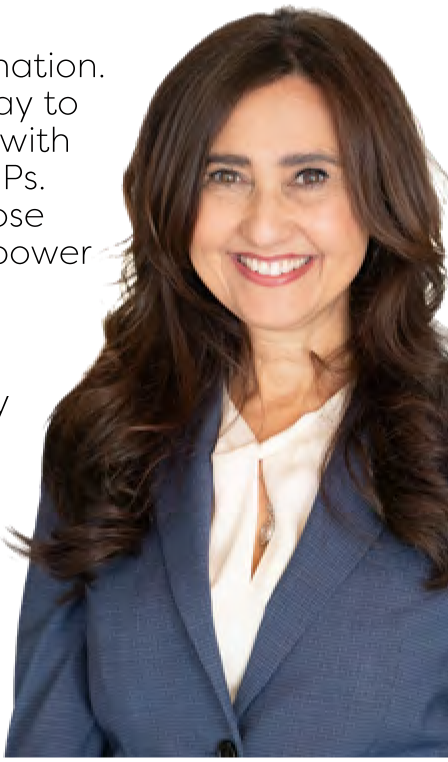
From the very beginning, our vision was clear: no one should ever feel alone when told they have glaucoma. We wanted GNZ to stand as an advocate for patients, a partner for clinicians, and a voice to government. To bring together everyone touched by glaucoma. The aim was to create a community where people felt supported and informed, and where the health system was better equipped to respond. If we could replace fear with confidence and isolation with connection, then we were fulfilling that vision.

Were there surprising challenges or turning points in those early days?

One surprise was just how silent glaucoma was outside the clinic. Even within families, people didn't talk about it. That silence was dangerous.

A turning point came when we published the very first Eyelights. Patients would bring it into appointments, underlined and dog-eared saying, "This is the first time I've really understood what's happening to me."

It wasn't just information. It gave people a way to start conversations with their families and GPs. What we saw in those moments was the power of knowledge and connection. When people understood their condition, they felt less fearful and more in control. That sense of empowerment was exactly what we hoped GNZ could offer.


Prof. Helen Danesh-Meyer.

How did you want people to feel when they first connected with GNZ?

I think of one elderly gentleman who came to a public meeting. He'd sat quietly at the back, and afterwards told me it was the first time he'd ever met another person with glaucoma. He said, "I thought I was the only one." That sense of connection, of not being alone, was what we always wanted people to feel when they reached out to us.

GNZ transforms fear into understanding, and isolation into community, so that no New Zealander has to face glaucoma in silence.

Glaucoma New Zealand was establised in **2002**

4 founding trustees: Ken Tarr, Helen Danesh-Meyer, Gordon Sanderson, and Mike O'Rourke.

Because of you, Karen's living well with glaucoma

Every person who connects with Glaucoma NZ has their own story. Karen's journey reminds us what your support makes possible. Reassurance, knowledge and a sense of community for every New Zealander navigating glaucoma.

Receiving a glaucoma diagnosis can be overwhelming. Questions can feel big. The unknowns, even bigger.

But as many people living with glaucoma will tell you, there is life, clarity and confidence after diagnosis.

Meet Karen

She knew glaucoma ran in her family because her father had it. But it wasn't something she thought much about. That changed after a routine eye test revealed raised eye pressure. Looking back, she remembers small signs, like bumping her car on the side of her narrow garage, that hinted something wasn't quite right. A referral to a specialist followed, and then came the news: "You're at the early stages of glaucoma."

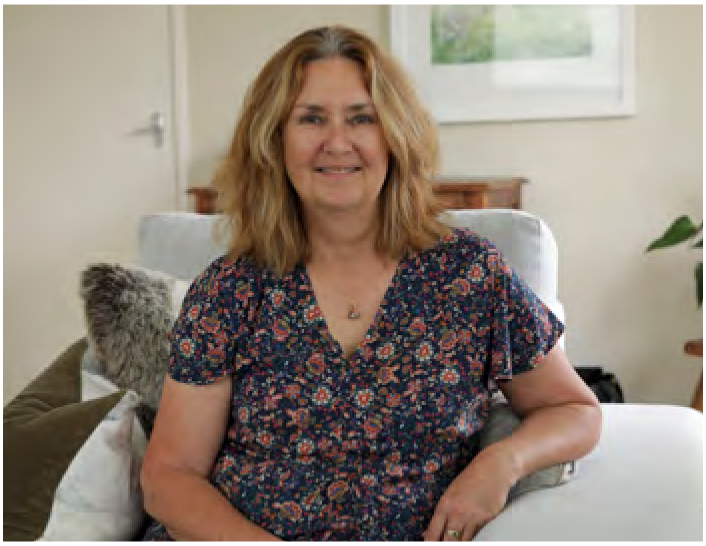
"It felt like a lot," Karen shares. "I didn't know what to expect. I kept wondering, 'What does this actually mean for me?'"

Finding her way forward

Rather than panic, Karen began to seek out information.

"I started reading, really reading," she says. "And what I learned was reassuring. I realised that glaucoma doesn't define who I am. It's just something I manage now, like taking drops each day."

She discovered Glaucoma NZ and found comfort in the stories of others going through the same thing.



Karen was referred to GNZ in 2024.

"I loved reading patient journeys," she says. "They helped me feel less alone. I could see myself in their stories."

At every step, empathy made all the difference. "You're being told something life-changing," Karen says. "The best specialists help you feel safe."

Several months on, Karen's life looks much the same. She's in a solid routine with her treatment and feels confident in managing her eye health.

"Being diagnosed early has been a real bonus," she says. "It means I'm aware, informed and able to protect my sight."

Glaucoma hasn't slowed her down. It's simply become part of her daily rhythm. "It doesn't define who I am. It's just something I'm learning to live with."

Your impact in action

When someone is newly diagnosed with glaucoma, your support is there.

You help make early diagnosis possible.

You help people feel less alone.

You help them live well with glaucoma.

And the support you've made possible? It's designed for people just like Karen. There's more to do. Let's keep going.

9,000 *Eyelights* newsletters printed and **23,44** sent via email

99,505 e-news sent to an average of **8292** subscribers

181+ hours of direct support provided to patients and the public*

456 calls were received through 0800 GLAUCOMA phoneline

105 peer support group gatherings held across the country

**not including outgoing phone calls*

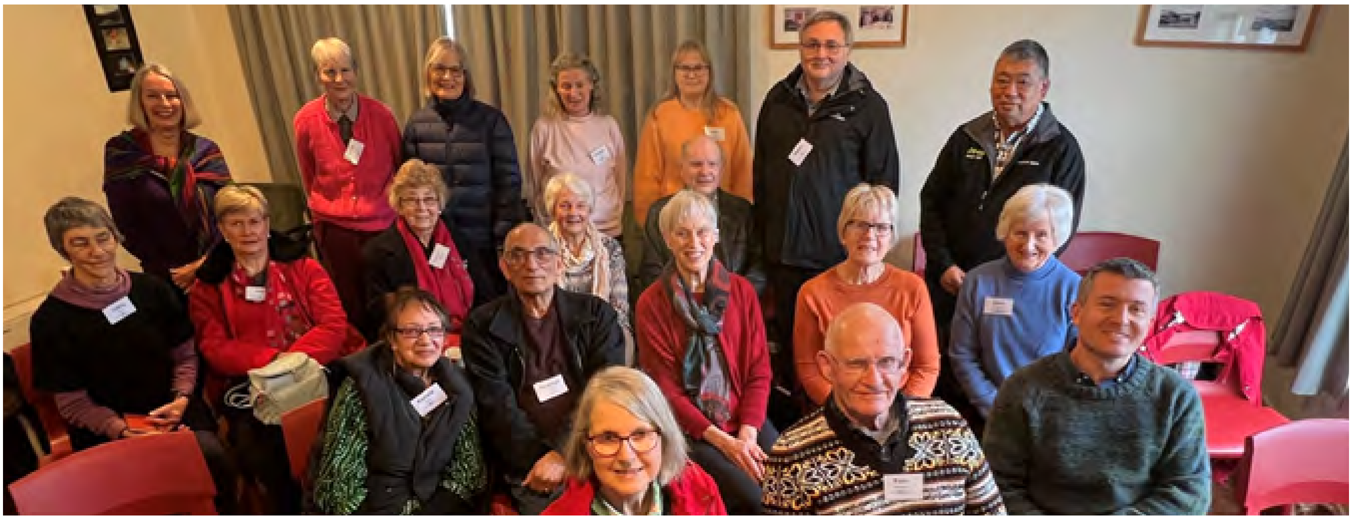
How you turn connection into community

You've helped Glaucoma NZ grow from an idea into a movement, one that connects, informs and empowers. Every person who joins this community adds strength, and every story shows what's possible when we work together to make sight a shared priority.

Over the past year, you helped turn connection into action, curiosity into education and understanding into confidence. One example is how you help volunteers, health professionals and peers create spaces where people can live well with glaucoma.

When curiosity sparks community

Two of those volunteers, Debbi and Katherine, met through the Glaucoma NZ Patient Education Symposium in Wellington. Inspired to help others, they put up their hands to start a local peer support group.



Wellington Glaucoma NZ Peer Support Group with ophthalmologist Jesse Gale.

How you turn connection into community cont.

What began as one small group has become a thriving community. Every month they meet to chat or to host sessions with guest speakers. Topics are chosen by members, covering what they care about most. “We certainly are seeing budding friendships forming, which is lovely to be part of,” says Katherine.

Volunteer Group Facilitators Debbi (left) and Katherine (right) with ophthalmologist Dr Jesse Gale

Friendship, learning, and local support

Their group’s curiosity also sparked a national education initiative. Members wanted to understand what really happens inside a glaucoma clinic. So, Debbi and Katherine invited ophthalmologist Dr Jesse Gale to speak. His presentation was such a success that he volunteered to host it online, making it available nationwide.

Your impact goes nationwide

“I want to be around others who understand my disease,” says Debbi. Katherine adds,

“All our members are so appreciative. The sharing of experiences every time means we’re always learning something new.”

Together, we’re helping people live well with glaucoma

From one conversation at a symposium to friendships and national education, your support makes all this possible. Together, we’re continuing to grow stronger networks and lasting support for everyone living with glaucoma.

14 active support groups across the country

3 new groups: Tauranga, Palmerston North and Invercargill

2 online peer support groups for general and for paediatric patients

4 in-person patient and public education symposiums around NZ with **265** attendees

4 live online patient education sessions with **167** registrations and **17,254** video views

Your support is shaping the future of glaucoma care

In January 2024, Glaucoma NZ took an important step to secure its future, and it began with you. Your support made it possible to grow our small team and bring in dedicated fundraising and communications expertise. This helped reach more people, raise vital funds and build lasting awareness.

This investment marked a turning point. With a clear fundraising plan in place, we created new ways for you to get involved. This included regular giving as a 'Sight Saver' to leaving a lasting legacy as one of our 'Glaucoma Guardians'. These initiatives give you simple, meaningful ways to protect sight for future generations.

"It's been a privilege to help build a fundraising programme. It's heartfelt and ready to flourish," says Fundraising Manager Sandy McGregor. "I hope every supporter feels proud of what we've created together.

> **"Your generosity and trust are what make it possible."**

Your generosity also powered one of our most significant milestones yet. Together, we raised $115,000 to fund a vital clinical trial on preservative-free eye drops. It's paving the way for fairer access to treatment across Aotearoa New Zealand. The research is now moving through the ethics approval process, with findings set to strengthen our advocacy for you and your loved ones.

Every gift, every membership and every voice of support brings us closer to a New Zealand where no one loses sight unnecessarily. Thank you for believing in Glaucoma NZ. You're helping build a fair and thriving community, one that's better informed, better supported and better prepared for the future.

You raised **$115,000** for transformative research

$186,706 through bequests or Gifts in Will

and **$23,356** through regular monthly giving

3,000 glaucoma simulation glasses distributed

15 community speaking engagements organised by Glaucoma NZ

10+ media outlets covering Glaucoma Awareness Month 2025

You showed us what glaucoma looks like

During Glaucoma Awareness Month 2025, you helped New Zealand see glaucoma differently.

This was through Glaucoma NZ's new glaucoma simulation glasses, giving people the chance to experience what it can feel like to live with glaucoma. Created especially for awareness, the glasses were designed to help Glaucoma NZ members, eye health professionals and the public start meaningful conversations. Ones that lead to regular eye health checks.

When ordering the glasses, people told us why they wanted to take part. One said,

> **"My dad has glaucoma, so I wanted to know what seeing is like for him."**

Another shared, "My grandad and my mum both had glaucoma, so I took the glasses to show my sister and start a conversation about getting her eyes checked." The manager of a retirement village: "I'll be using these for awareness to help my staff understand what our residents are experiencing."

Thanks to your support, the campaign reached workplaces, schools, health clinics and homes across the country. Ambassador Patrick 'Paddy' Gower helped amplify the message. And national coverage on Seven Sharp, Radio New Zealand, NZ Optics and local media from Northland to the Bay of Plenty carried it even further. Requests for glasses even came from Australia, Dublin and the United States.

Your support meant that people living with glaucoma felt seen and heard. Families began new conversations about eye health. Health professionals were equipped with a powerful teaching tool. And new awareness led to more people taking action to protect their sight.

Glaucoma Awareness Month 2025 showed how empathy can spark action. And it laid the foundation for even more community involvement in 2026. Thank you for helping New Zealanders see what really matters and for ensuring no one loses their vision to glaucoma.

Tauranga Support Group members model the glaucoma simulation glasses.

Your support helps build pathways to care

This year, you helped us deepen relationships with eye health professionals. In-turn, more people can be referred to Glaucoma NZ early in their journey. Every referral means support can be received at the moment a person needs it most. It also means clinicians can feel confident their patients are cared for beyond the clinic.

The Extension of Care Collective in 2023

We know not everyone diagnosed with glaucoma is referred for support. Some find us years later, after living with uncertainty or fear. Others miss out altogether. Without clear and consistent referral pathways, precious time is lost. It's time that could have been spent helping people protect their sight and feel less alone.

Your support of our efforts to collaborate with others has been so important. For example, Glaucoma NZ is part of a network of like-minded organisations across Australasia. It's called the Extension of Care Collective. Through it, we aim to strengthen referral pathways and share ideas that will help every person with glaucoma connect to care sooner.

We also engage health professionals through providing education and attending events. Highlights include the Women in Ophthalmology conference in Queenstown, the New Zealand Association of Optometrists Conference in Wellington and the General Practitioners Conference in Rotorua. Each conversation helps build trust, raise awareness and show how GNZ can extend the care professionals already provide.

Our General Manager, Pippa Martin, says this work is laying the foundations for something even more impactful:

"The conversations we are having now are paving the way for a seamless national referral pathway.

> **"We are building towards a model where every person diagnosed with glaucoma is automatically connected to the support they need, early, consistently and compassionately."**

This vision will take shape in the coming year as GNZ prepares to introduce SiGHTWiSE. It's a new national patient support initiative inspired by proven international models. It is the next step toward ensuring that support is not left to chance.

Every referral, shared idea and connection to a health professional will bring us closer to that goal. Your continued support will strengthen these partnerships further. We will reach more professionals and ensure everyone with glaucoma has a clear path to care and confidence. Thank you again for building that future with Glaucoma NZ.

171 professional education attendees

3 expos attended with health professionals

GLAUCOMA NZ
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Glaucoma NZ is a registered charitable trust (No. CC21421) that receives no government funding.
Education resources & support are free thanks to the generosity of Glaucoma NZ members.
Donations of $5 and over are tax deductible.

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