

The History of the Eye Surgery Foundation (ESF) Charity

The ESF charity was the precursor charity and the source of seed funding for the Perth Eye Foundation (PEF). The board of the PEF wish to acknowledge the contributions of those who fostered the ESF, enabling the emergence of the PEF as one of Australia's most significant ophthalmic charities.

In 1988 a group of eight Perth ophthalmologists met and agreed to invest in the establishment of a dedicated ophthalmic day care facility operating under the name of the Perth Eye Centre (PEC). The founders were Drs. Geoff Morlet, Ian Anderson, Phil House, Ross Littlewood, Alan Nicol, John Rogers, Gordon Bougher, and Michael Walsh. The PEC commenced operations in a leased theatre at the South Perth Surgicentre in 1988. Although it opened with just three staff members it grew rapidly as more surgeons requested access to its skilled staff and specialist equipment. By 1989 it was growing so fast that it was able to acquire its own premises. In 1990 a building at 42 Ord Street West Perth was converted into Perth's first free standing private ophthalmic day surgery centre. Because it was operated by ophthalmologists for the exclusive benefit of eye patients the quality of the service exceeded what was available locally and even more ophthalmologists requested access. The demand for theatre time required additional theatres to be constructed, and in 2013 the building next door was acquired and incorporated into the facility which was then renamed from the 'Perth Eye Foundation' to the 'Perth Eye Hospital.'

By 1991 it became obvious that the business was growing so fast that management would require a board with business expertise to oversee the large investments and incomes that were predicted. The founding PEC board agreed to a novel organisational structure that gave control of the premises to a registered charity known as the Eye Surgery Foundation (ESF) in 1992. The PEC retained autonomous control over the day to day operations of the business and paid rent to the ESF. The ESF was governed by a board with expertise in law,

accounting, and management, as well as ophthalmic surgery, and all its operating surplus was distributed to worthwhile ophthalmic charities. The board of the ESF spent most of their time managing the building and on regulatory compliance, leaving them relatively little time to consider how to distribute their operating profits. During the 1990's the operating surplus was reduced by the need to invest in expanding the number of theatres to meet demand, but between 2000 and 2019 the ESF distributed over 4 million dollars to ophthalmic charities in Australia and overseas.

By 2017 the original board members of the PEC had all been replaced and the new board decided to accept a take over offer from the CURA group of day care hospitals who operate many similar day care theatres around Australia. In 2019 the relationship between PEC and the ESF was terminated as part of that arrangement and the ESF moved to new premises at 10 Stirling Highway Nedlands, and then sold the building in West Perth. The move from West Perth to Nedlands coincided with a change of board membership as well as a change in focus. The board now had more time to concentrate on the management of the charity and it obtained legal advice that it should change its ASIC registration to a company limited by guarantee. As part of that renewal process the board registered a new charity called the Perth Eye Foundation (PEF) limited on January 22nd 2020. Over \$16M controlled by the ESF was transferred as seed funding to the PEF, and the ESF closed. As part of good governance the PEF board receive professional advice about financial investments, risk management, and legal obligations, and have instituted an independent advisory board to recommend which projects are most worthwhile to support. This advisory group meets independently and is called the Program Partners Advisory Panel (PPAP). The PEF and PPAP do not employ any full time staff and most of their work is done pro bono by enthusiastic and committed Eye Health Professionals who offer their time to improve eye care in WA and beyond. All costs are tightly controlled in order to keep overheads as low as possible. As a result the PEF fully funds its own operating costs out of investment income and distributes the surplus from investments exclusively to support the programmes selected by the PPAP. The total annual distribution varies from year to year depending on the returns it receives from investment, and donations from outside the charity. All donations made to the PEF from outside the charity are transferred in full to one or more of its programmes without commission. There are very few charities that operate with a similar level of efficiency.

Although many of the founding group of eight who first established the Eye Surgery Foundation are no longer alive their legacy lives on in the work of the Perth Eye Foundation.

The past board members of the ESF were:

Ian Anderson 1993-06

Campbell Ansell 1998-06

Dagmar Barnes 2008-14

Ian Constable 1992-4

Richard Cooper 1993-5

Phillip House 1993-6, 2014-2022

Ian Kaye-Edie 2006-17

Michael Lewis 1998-15

Ross Littlewood 2014-2022

William Morgan 1995-8

Geoffrey Morlet 1992-08

Liane Papaelias 2017-2022

Kathryn Reid 2015-2020

Anne Russell-Brown 2017-2018

Paul Setchell 2006-17

Helen Smith 2009-14

Andrew Stewart 2006-14

Raymond Whitford 1992-06

