CENTRE FOR
Eye Research
Australia

Impact Report 2025

How your support is helping us protect sight

Message from our Managing Director

Every day, researchers at CERA work towards discoveries that mean more people can keep their vision.

We are only able to do this thanks to the generous donations from people like you, who believe in the research that we are undertaking.

In 2025, your support advanced research programs focusing on many of the eye conditions that impact people both in Australia and across the globe.

In age-related macular degeneration, we have been able to pinpoint the specific genetic changes that increase a person's risk of developing the most severe forms of the disease. This has the potential to lead to new, more effective treatments that could prevent vision loss before it occurs.

Gene therapies have also taken early, important steps in our labs. These include early research that has the potential to end the need for regular eye injections and others aimed at treating currently incurable inherited retinal diseases.

Your donations mean that all this work will take its next significant steps as we welcome new, leading researchers, Professor Pete Williams and Dr Jiang-Hui (Sloan) Wang, to pursue their ambitious research programs at CERA.

We also embraced technology in 2025 – with the use of artificial intelligence (AI) for eye scans to detect the earliest signs of diseases like diabetic retinopathy. We hope this work will make eye scans both easier to perform and more accessible for people throughout the country.

We can't wait to see what you'll help us achieve in 2026 as we continue to work towards discovering real-world solutions for people affected by vision loss and blindness. Thank you for your donations that have made all of this possible.

Professor Keith Martin
CERA Managing Director

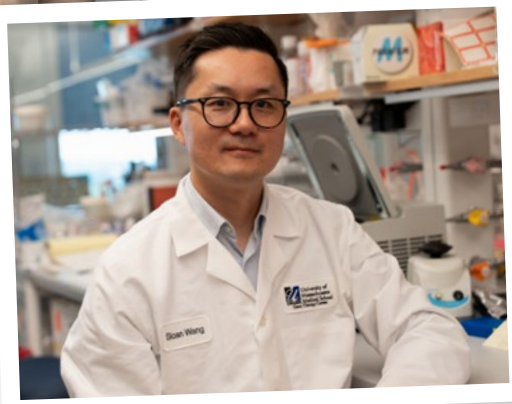
Solving eye health's biggest challenges

Your support is helping us study the major eye diseases that cause vision loss and reduce their impact on people's lives.

Our focus	The facts	Our work
Glaucoma **Glaucoma damages the optic nerve which connects the eye and brain, leading to vision loss**	Glaucoma is the leading cause of irreversible blindness worldwide. An estimated 300,000 Australians have glaucoma.	We're working towards understanding what causes cells in the optic nerve to die, treatments that go beyond reducing pressure in the eye and eventually a way to restore sight.
Inherited retinal diseases (IRDs) **A broad group of genetic eye conditions that cause vision loss and blindness**	IRD's are the most common cause of legal blindness in working-aged Australians, and the second most common cause in children.	Our scientists are developing new gene therapies in the lab. We also work with families living with IRDs. This helps find the genes that cause the conditions, develop treatments and make sure people can access clinical trials when they are ready.
Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) **A complex disease that causes central vision loss due to damage to the macular**	AMD is the leading cause of legal blindness in Australia for people over 50 years of age. Nearly one in 15 Australians over the age of 80 has late-stage AMD.	We're working to learn more about the causes of this complex disease, including who is most at risk of AMD progressing to its later forms so they can receive treatment before losing vision.
Diabetic eye disease **Vision loss associated with diabetes**	Almost 1.9 million Australians have diabetes. On average, one in three of these people have some level of diabetic eye complication.	We're working to make eye checks easier for people most at risk of losing their vision – including women with pre-existing diabetes during pregnancy – through technologies like artificial intelligence.
Advancing technology **Vision research for the future**	Using cutting-edge technology, we're developing new, innovative treatments for other eye conditions.	New imaging technologies are being developed to better diagnose and monitor cancer in the eye. We are finding better ways to treat inflammatory eye diseases like uvietis, and are part of a collaboration to develop a bioengineered cornea.

Highlights

Here's some of the achievements that you've helped make happen in 2025.



Your contributions to the **2025 Hope in Sight Giving Day** broke all our records, with over $200,000 raised in support of research into new treatments for Usher syndrome and other inherited retinal diseases (IRDs). Dr Jiang-Hui (Sloan) Wang (above), a rising star in IRD research, can now continue his innovative research at a new lab in CERA.

The **Synergy High Risk AMD Study,** co-led by CERA's Professor Robyn Guymer, has for **the first time pinpointed specific genetic changes that increase a person's risk of developing severe, sight-threatening forms of age related macular degeneration (AMD)**. This offers a promising new target for future treatments, paving the way to better diagnosis and management of AMD. This discovery provides a crucial lead for developing new drugs that target these changes—potentially preventing vision loss before it begins.

The Synergy High Risk AMD Study team (above L-R): Associate Professor Zhichao Wu, Professor Alice Pébay, Professor Robyn Guymer AM, Professor Erica Fletcher, Professor Melanie Bahlo, Dr Brendan Ansell and Associate Professor Carla Abbott.

The **2025 District 201V3 Lions Ride for Sight** team – including our own Head of Genetic Engineering Research, Associate Professor Guei-Sheung (Rick) Liu – **raised over $120,000** to support CERA's research. In its 31st year, the event was a four-day bike ride in the Gippsland region of Victoria. This long-running event has supported numerous research programs over the decades while bringing people together in support of vision research.

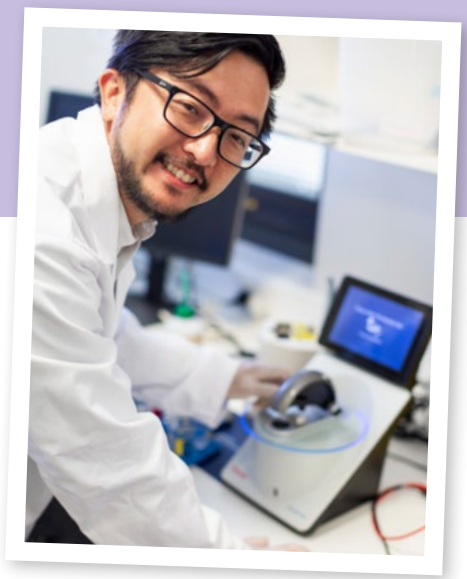
Nearly **150** of you attended **CERA's inaugural Garden Tour** of three celebrated gardens in the Macedon Ranges – raising vital funds to support our research to cure vision loss and blindness.

Postdoctoral Research Fellow Dr Sena Gocuk's **innovative research into female carriers of X-linked inherited retinal diseases** identifies a carrier's risk of severe vision loss, and the safety and efficacy of gene therapy for these women – historically overlooked in this area of research.

The continuation of this vital research is due to your generous donations, as well as support from The Felton Bequest, Retina Australia, the Jack Brockhoff Foundation and the AAMRI VIC Commercialisation for Medical Researchers initiative.

Impact

Your support has made a significant impact on our research.

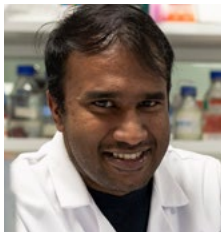


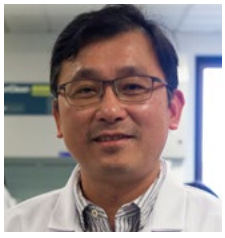
Members of **CERA's Consumer Program are shaping the research we undertake**. As well as actively contributing to how research is conducted, they are also helping bring more people into our research, by sharing their experiences of participating in clinical trials and letting other people know how they can get involved.

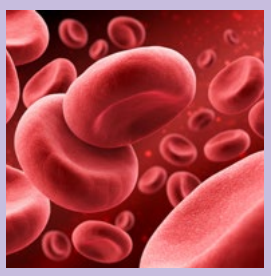
Members of CERA's Consumer Group meeting with researchers

Your early philanthropic support has seen our **cellular reprogramming research go from strength to strength**. Now, spin-out company **Mirugen,** headed by Professor Raymond CB Wong (above), has attracted **$4.5m of investment** to progress its research to human trial.

Research by Satheesh Kumar (below left) and Associate Professor Guei-Sheung (Rick) Liu from CERA and the University of Melbourne is making early progress towards developing a **gene therapy technique with the potential to end the need for regular eye injections.**







In a world first, scientists at CERA have shown tiny **particles derived from blood have the potential to provide first-line treatment** for corneal injuries.

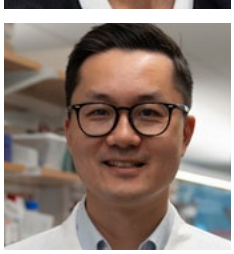
We are making our **information more accessible to people with all levels of vision** through a video and audio library on our website – cera.org.au /consumer-resources

An Australian trial run by Associate Professor Lisa Zhuoting Zhu and Dr Sanil Joseph (right) has found that an **automated AI camera can accurately detect diabetic eye disease** with more than 93 per cent accuracy in non-eye care settings. The results show that it has the potential to be part of routine care for people with diabetes and will be able to make scans easier to access.

Professor Lauren Ayton AM and Dr Alexis Ceecee Britten-Jones lead VENTURE

In a **research milestone, over 600 people with an inherited retinal disease are now involved in the VENTURE project** – a registry driving inherited retinal disease research and giving access to research opportunities for people with these conditions.

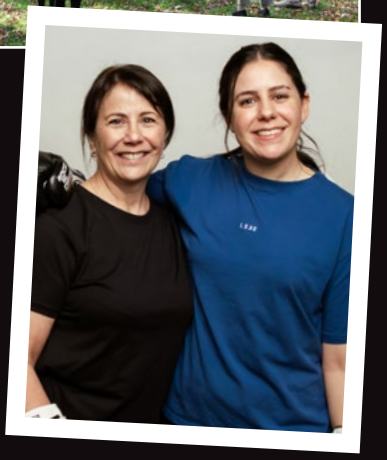
CERA's Head of Genetic Engineering Research, Associate Professor Guei-Sheung (Rick) Liu, and his team are working on **RNA editing to create and develop treatments for inherited retinal diseases**.



Dr Sushma Anand (left), Professor Robyn Guymer AM and Dr Jiang-Hui (Sloan) Wang are being supported by the Macular Disease Foundation Australia in their projects aiming to **advance research into macular telangiectasia type 2, Stargardt's disease and age-related macular degeneration.**

CERA's Dr Jiang-Hui (Sloan) Wang has received funding from the DHB Foundation to establish a **game-changing lab platform to accelerate his research in gene therapy.**

Thank you for your continued support of a future free from vision loss and blindness



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Donate today and support our research to keep hope in sight for people affected by vision loss and blindness.

CERA.eye
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