



Professor Fred Hollows

AC, MB ChB (NZ) DO (LOND) FRCS FRACO
(9 April 1929 - 10 February 1993)

Photo | Professor Fred Hollows. Photo courtesy of Frank Violi.

Early Years

Frederick Cossom Hollows was born on 9 April 1929 in New Zealand and grew up in Palmerston North.

Fred enrolled in medical school after he discovered he wasn't cut out to be a clergyman and decided instead to become an 'eye doctor' - a trade he described as "good work".

Fred spent several years doing post-graduate work in Wales but in 1965 he moved to Australia to become Associate Professor of Ophthalmology at the University of New South Wales, (UNSW) in Sydney. He was also Chairman of the Division of Ophthalmology at UNSW, Prince of Wales and Prince Henry teaching hospitals.

Australian Focus

In the 1970s Fred began his work with Indigenous communities in Australia. He helped establish the Aboriginal Medical Service in Redfern, Sydney and was instrumental in the establishment of other Aboriginal Medical Services throughout Australia.

Also in the 1970s, Fred dedicated three years to visiting Indigenous communities in rural Australia to survey and provide eye care services. The results were published as

The National Trachoma & Eye Health Program (NTEHP), (Royal Australasian College of Ophthalmologists), Sydney, 1979.

Over 465 Aboriginal communities were visited and 100,000 people screened, of whom 62,000 were Indigenous Australians. The NTEHP treated 27,000 people for trachoma and performed 1,000 operations.



Photo | Fred Hollows examining an Indigenous Australian's eyes during the National Trachoma and Eye Health Program. Photo courtesy of Stephen Ellison/Outline.

"Until Aborigines share the same basic conditions of hygiene, sound diet, insect proof housing, sanitation and clean water... Aborigines in rural parts of the country will continue to be afflicted with avoidable diseases such as trachoma" - Fred Hollows

International Focus

In 1985 Fred worked as a consultant to the World Health Organization (WHO) and visited Nepal, Burma, Sri Lanka, India and Bangladesh on short-term assignments.

After attending a conference in Egypt, he made his first visit to Eritrea and realised that people in developing countries, like Eritrea, were suffering from blindness simply because of a lack of basic medical resources.

Fred saw a growing disparity between the haves and the have-nots and decided to do something about it. He made the decision to work towards reducing the cost of eye health care treatment in developing countries, with a focus on cataract blindness.

In the 1980s a mystique had grown up around modern cataract surgery which had put it into the league of open heart or organ transplant surgery.

Intraocular lenses (IOLs), which are used to replace the damaged lens of the eye in modern cataract surgery, were costing up to USD\$100 in some developing countries. Fred described them as “the most expensive bits of plastic in existence”.

To help make treatment more accessible to people suffering from cataract blindness, Fred raised the money needed to build intraocular lens manufacturing laboratories in Kathmandu (in Nepal) and Asmara (in Eritrea). These laboratories were opened in 1994, the year after Fred died.

By producing IOLs in-country the market price was dramatically reduced and more developing countries were able to afford to purchase them.

Today, the laboratories have a combined manufacturing output of approximately 250,000 lenses annually and export to more than 40 countries.



Photo | Fred Hollows examining the eyes of nine year old Tran Van Giap in Hanoi, Vietnam in 1992. Photo courtesy of www.michaelamendolia.com.

Fred was also Founding President of RedR Australia - an organisation which relieves suffering in developing countries by selecting, training and providing competent and effective personnel to humanitarian relief agencies.

Fred also had a vision to develop robust and effective microscopes and YAG lasers for use in cataract treatment in developing countries.

The Fred Hollows Foundation (established in 1992) was able to carry out this vision and found Australian companies interested in helping to develop this equipment to The Foundation's specifications, ie low cost, durable, portable and robust to fit conditions in developing countries.

Thirteen years on, The Foundation's vision is of a world where no one is needlessly blind and where Indigenous Australians enjoy the same health outcomes as all Australians.

Since 1992 The Fred Hollows Foundation has worked in collaboration with local partners in more than 34 countries throughout Africa, Asia and the Pacific.

The Foundation continues to be inspired by the vision and energy of Fred Hollows and his passion for better health for poor and disadvantaged communities.

Fred's Legacy

When Fred became busy, conflict was inevitable. Some sensibilities may have been bruised, hindrances had to be overcome, waffle was dismissed and wasted time not tolerated. But the patient, whoever or wherever he or she may be, would see the doctor.

It goes without saying that Fred Hollows was a remarkable character. Thanks to his hard work and vision, more than one million people - as far as Eritrea, Nepal and Vietnam - can see today.

Fred Hollows was 63 when he died on 10 February, 1993. He is buried in Bourke Cemetery in country NSW, Australia.

Fred is survived by his wife Gabi Hollows and their five children Cam, Emma, Anna-Louise, Ruth and Rosa, and Tanya and Ben from a previous relationship.



Photo | Some of the Hollows family (left to right) Fred, Anna, Cam, Emma and Gabi in 1990. Photo courtesy of *Oliver Strewe*.



Photo | Professor Fred Hollows. Photo courtesy of www.hollows.org/photolibrary/

Interesting Info

Fred's favourite poets were Keats and Kipling and his favourite tree was the Gidgee (Acacia Cambagei). His favourite foods included crème caramel, damper, pickled walnuts and cold meats!

Ever wondered what Fred's favourite colour was? Gabi says:

"Fred didn't have a favourite colour. He was just pleased that he could see all of the colours in the colour chart. That was his wish for everyone. Fred wanted people to experience the joy of seeing vivid colours - in nature: the greens and browns of the mountains; in their work: the orange, red and black of the back of the retina; and in life."

Further Information

See *below* for a timeline of Fred Hollows' life and details of awards presented to him.

There are also a number of books, articles and websites devoted to Fred and his legacy. Visit www.hollows.org to find out more.

Recognition and Awards

1981

- Received an Advance Australia Award for Aboriginal eye care

1990

- Awarded the Human Rights Medal

- Named Australian of the Year

- Advance Australia Award for Medicine and Overseas Aid

1991

- Humanist of the Year

- Named a Paul Harris Fellow by Rotary International

- Awarded Doctor of Medicine and Doctor of Science, Honoris Causa, UNSW

- Appointed Companion, General Division of the Order of Australia (AC)

- Received Degree of Doctor of Science, Honoris Causa, Macquarie University

- Admitted as Doctor of Medicine Honoris Causa, UNSW

- Named Eritrea's first honorary citizen

1992

- Awarded an Honorary Doctorate by Queensland University of Technology

1993

- Albert Schweitzer Award of Distinction Chapman University, USA

- Received Rotary International's highest honour, the Rotary Award for World Understanding. Other recipients of this award include Pope John-Paul II, Perez de Cuellar, Vaclav Havel and the International Red Cross.

- The evening before he died, Fred was presented with The Royal Australian College of Ophthalmologists Medal for his years of distinguished meritorious and selfless service.

- Lions Clubs International honoured him posthumously by naming him a Melvin Jones Fellow.

2004

- New Zealand Prime Minister, Rt. Hon Helen Clark made a speech at a fundraising event organised by The Fred Hollows Foundation (NZ), 'An evening with Sir Edmund Hillary'. Tribute was paid to Fred Hollows for his work to help Indigenous Australians and people living with blindness.

- Entered into the 'Hall of Fame' in the inaugural NSW Aboriginal Health Awards. This was in recognition of Fred's 'outstanding contribution and achievement' to Indigenous health in Australia. Gabi Hollows received the award on his behalf.

2005

- Canberra Eye Hospital, ACT, Australia, honoured Fred by naming an operating theatre after him. Fred performed surgery there soon after he came back from the United Kingdom in the 1960s.

2006

- Included in The Bulletin Magazine's list of 100 most influential Australians.

Quotes from Fred Hollows

"I believe that the basic attribute of mankind is to look after each other."

"I hardly knew what a cataract was, but I was determined that in my training I would learn."

Timeline

1929	Born in New Zealand 9 April Grew up in Palmerston North
1946-1949	BA Degree, Victoria University, Wellington
1950	Glenleith Bible College, Dunedin
1951-1955	Medical School, University of Otago, Dunedin
1955-1956	Wellington Hospital
1957-1960	House Surgeon, Auckland Hospital
1958	Married Mary Skiller
1961	Studied ophthalmology, Moorfields, United Kingdom
1961-1964	Ophthalmic Registrar and Epidemiology, Cardiff, Wales
1965-1992	Associate Professor of Ophthalmology, UNSW, Sydney, Australia Chairman of Division of Ophthalmology of the UNSW, Prince of Wales and Prince Henry teaching hospitals, Sydney, Australia
1970	First worked in Bourke
1971	Helped set up first Aboriginal Medical Centre, Redfern, Sydney
1973	Worked in South America
1975	Fred's first wife, Mary, died Director of National Trachoma and Eye Health Program (NTEHP)
1980	Married Gabi O'Sullivan
1981	Resigned from NTEHP
1985	Refused Order of Australia because of state of Aboriginal health First visit to Nepal
1987	First visit to Eritrea
1988	Diagnosed with cancer
1989	Became an Australian citizen on 26 April
1990	Second visit to Eritrea

1991	Visited Eritrea and received honorary citizenship Visited Nepal and Vietnam
1992	The Fred Hollows Foundation launched in Australia
1993	Died in Sydney on 10 February Survived by Gabi and children Tanya, Ben, Cam, Emma, Anna-Louise, Ruth and Rosa State Funeral held at St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney on 15 February Buried in Bourke on 17 February
1994	IOL Laboratory opened in Eritrea IOL Laboratory and Surgical Eye Centre opened in Nepal