

Engaging with your patients

Communications toolkit



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This
toolkit was
updated
in January
2021



Introduction from Optometry Australia

Optometry Australia is committed to promoting optometry and optometrists and educating Australians about their eye health and the importance of seeing an optometrist on a regular basis.

Optometry Australia drives this objective via its *Good vision for life* campaign, pushing out messages through various media channels and encouraging people to go to goodvisionforlife.com.au to explore more information on their eyes. Our consumer website is full of news and information about eye health and each page has a 'Find an optometrist' search function, enabling people to easily find an optometrist near them. All members of Optometry Australia are listed within this search function, which is also accessible via our corporate website, optometry.org.au. Combined, these searches attract over 25,000 page views annually.

We know there are some people in the community who may be concerned, and will continue to be concerned, about in-person healthcare, so we want to help assure them that we, as a profession, are taking the necessary precautions to keep them safe. We also want to remind them that regular eye examinations with an optometrist are a key part of a general health regime, now as much as ever.

To make it easy for you to extend these messages to your patients – and prospective patients – we have built this toolkit of materials which we hope you will find useful.



Make this your year of good vision, for life

Optometry Australia wants to inspire consumers to 'Make this your year of good vision, for life'.

We aim to reinforce to Australians:

- >> The importance of regular eye examinations with an optometrist
- >> The increasing importance of general health and self-care, within which eye health plays a critical part
- >> Safety measures within the optometry sector being taken to ensure the health of patients and staff
- >> Ongoing eye health and safety care within the new, COVID-normal

Supported by a grant from the Australian Government, we are going out to market in the first half of 2021 with a campaign based on these themes that will feature on TV, radio and digital channels – and we would love to extend this further with your involvement.

Together, we have an opportunity to reinforce to the community the importance of eye health delivered in the appropriate context. A review of our campaign messages within our new normal has delivered a suite of content designed to reflect sensitivity and reality around the national health situation.

In this toolkit you will find a suite of customisable materials to add to your marketing and communications efforts, including tools for public outreach, social media posts, media releases and more.

Additionally, www.goodvisionforlife.com.au is regularly updated with fresh, eye health-related news and content, found in the 'Stories' section, which we encourage you to share via your own platforms and channels such as your website, patient newsletters and social media.

Thank you for your partnership and continued commitment to the eye health and safety of the Australian public.

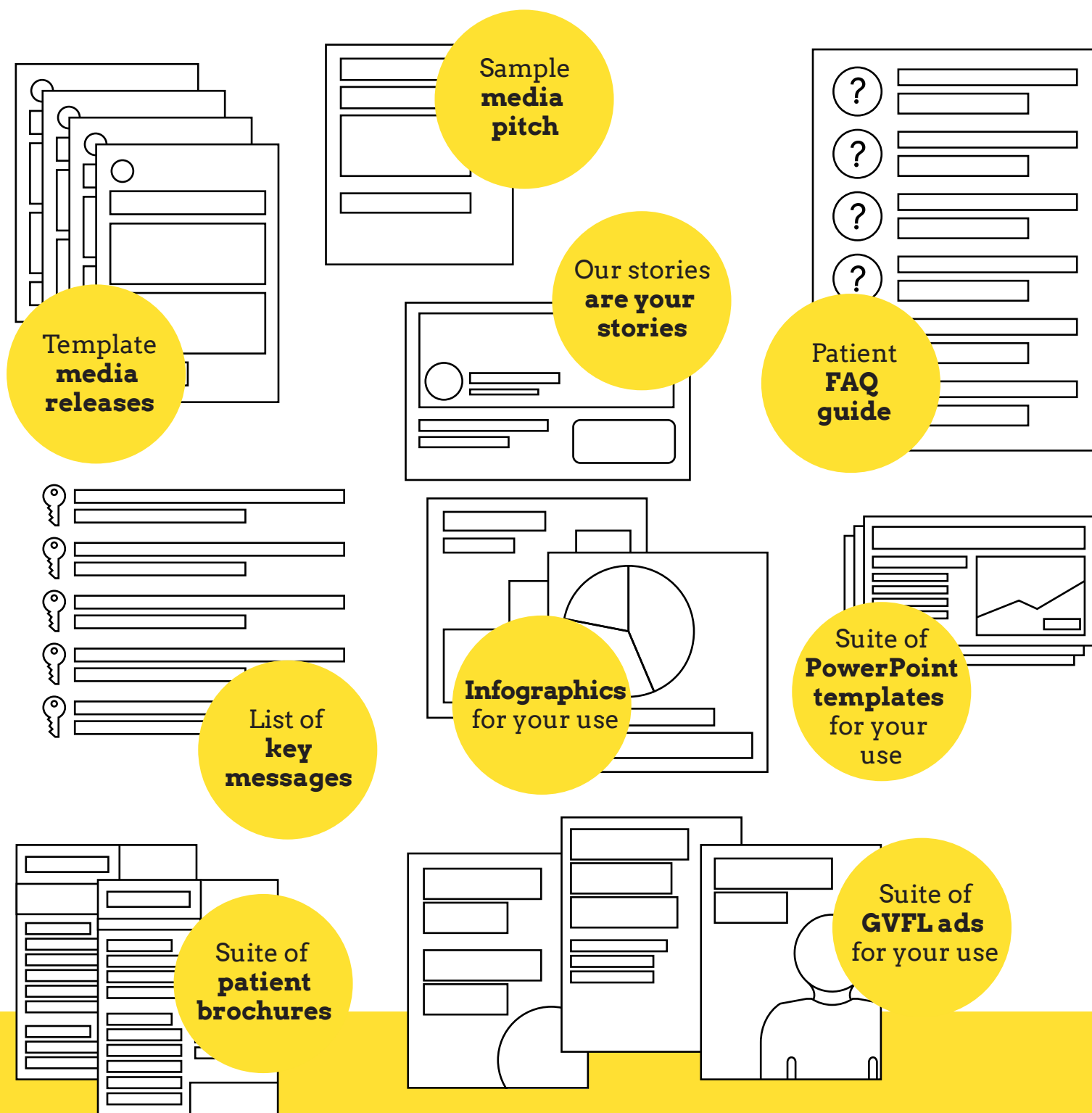


Communications context

At the time of writing this document, most of Australia was doing relatively well with regard to the number of coronavirus infections. There continue to be outbreaks however, and it's prudent to expect these are likely to continue throughout 2021.

Importantly, even when numbers are low and while optometry practices remain open, many people will still be wary about their health and safety when going to public places. For optometrists, that means communication can be key in re-engaging patients.

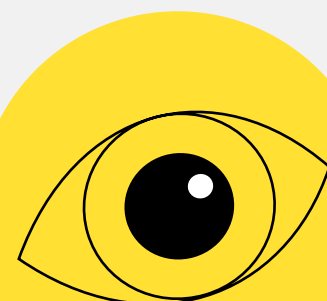
Included in the following section is a suite of tools designed to support you and your practice to effectively engage with patients, the general public and the media.



List of key messages

We have developed [these key messages](#) that we encourage you to use in your patient communications, if talking to the media, or within public forums. The more we can use these consistently, the more they will start to resonate within the community.

- >> Our optometrists are primary health care providers delivering comprehensive eye health and vision care.
- >> We are available to provide a range of comprehensive eye health and vision care services.
- >> Our practice has a stringent COVID-safe plan.
- >> In today's climate, taking care of your health is as critical as ever and patients may have a number of concerns related to their eye health as a result of the global pandemic. We can counsel patients and treat a number of eye-related conditions including digital eye strain, dry eye or the onset of myopia (short-sightedness) in children.
- >> With around 90% of blindness and vision impairment preventable or treatable if detected early enough, it is important to prioritise your eye health by having regular eye examinations.
- >> As optometrists, we are a vital part of your healthcare team. We can identify early warning signs and manifestations of more than 270 systemic and chronic diseases including diabetes, high blood pressure, autoimmune diseases and cancers.
- >> You can find an optometrist near you by using the Find an Optometrist search function on the *Good vision for life* website.
- >> We provide a healthy and safe environment for patients to receive optometric care. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic there are a range of consultation options available to suit patients' needs, including face-to-face care and tele-health. Stringent infection control principles are adhered to in our practice.
- >> Optometry Australia recommends regular eye examinations should commence from before starting primary school and then regularly throughout life, typically every two to three years. However, Australians should visit an optometrist immediately if they notice changes to their vision.
- >> Optometry Australia delivers the *Good vision for life* campaign, which aims to educate Australians about eye health, so there is loads of helpful information on www.goodvisionforlife.com.au. We encourage people to sign up to receive regular updates and information.
- >> The Optometry Australia 2020 Vision Index found that three quarters (76%) of all Australians consider their eyesight to be their most important sense, with three in five Australians stating they're worried about the quality of their eyesight.



Template media releases

Optometry Australia engages in proactive media relations with the purpose of generating stories in the media around eye health and the need for regular eye examinations. We appreciate some of our members have their own media relationships also, or would be happy to foster them with relevant media in their local or regional areas.

We have put together a collection of [template media releases](#) for you to use for this purpose, and will continue to update these on our website. Here is an example of a template media release.

MEDIA RELEASE

The one statistic Australians need to know when it comes to eye health

[City, State – Date] – During the COVID-19 pandemic, a significant drop in total rebateable optometric services under Medicare indicates that many Australians put off having eye examinations.

Given the restrictions that were put in place in some parts of the country, these figures aren't entirely surprising.

They are, however, concerning to [insert practice name]. This is because the most important statistic Australians need to know when it comes to their eye health is that the vast majority (90 per cent) of vision loss and blindness is preventable or treatable when identified early.

Optometrist [insert name] said that whilst there is now an upward trend in consultations, local residents of [insert practice name] who put off looking after their eye health should now not delay in having an eye examination.

What are the risks of not visiting the optometrist?

There's a misconception amongst Australians that visiting the optometrist is only necessary when something is noticeably wrong.

The reality is that many eye diseases develop slowly and sometimes without any obvious signs or symptoms. This is why regular eye examinations with an optometrist are essential to make early detection more achievable and combat potential issues.

Many eye diseases have no early symptoms. They may be painless and you may be not aware of your vision until the condition has progressed. Because of this, the single best way to protect your vision is through regular eye examinations.

It's vital that all Australians visit the optometrist, with Optometry Australia recommending regular eye examinations from the time just prior to starting school and then throughout life. Australians should visit an optometrist immediately if they notice changes in vision such as:

- Loss of vision
- Blurred, hazy or double vision
- Severe, sudden or recurrent eye pain
- Seeing flashes of light or sudden dark floating spots
- Unusual or painful sensitivity to light or glare
- Swollen, red eyes
- Excessive discharge from the eyes - particularly if green or yellow

Whilst COVID-19 continues to impact life in varying degrees, people should not neglect their eye health, endure discomfort or poor vision. Tele-health, videoconferencing and face-to-face consultation options are being offered for these reasons.

For more information contact: [insert practice name and contact details]

Sample media pitch

When approaching local media, it's preferable to send a short 'pitch' along with your media release. This gives them an overview of the key points of your story. An example is included here.



SUBJECT: Warning for Aussies to get eyes tested after nation neglects vision

Hi [REPORTER NAME]

I hope all is well. I wanted to touch base with a story for [MEDIA OUTLET] around **how Australians are neglecting their eye health and the risks this poses to vision.**

It comes off the back of calls from Australian optometrists warning Aussies to get their eyes checked after the sector noticed a worrying trend of patients dismissing symptoms and delaying attendance until "after COVID".

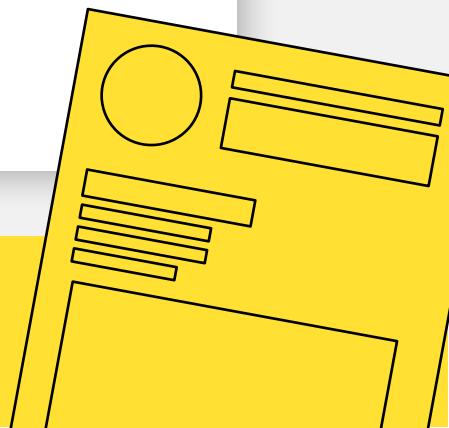
Key statistics

1. 90% of vision loss or blindness is preventable if detected early
2. Optometrists provided 630,000 fewer consultations in FY2019/2020
3. 76 percent of Australians consider sight to be their most important sense
4. More than a third (35%) of Australians do not undergo regular eye examinations, whilst an alarming 12% have never visited an optometrist

Based off of this data and expanded release (attached), would you be interested in a story with [OPTOMETRIST NAME] from [PRACTICE NAME] discussing the **risks of neglecting sight and why it's time for Australians to focus on vision.**

I hope to hear from you soon.

[SIGN OFF]



Patient FAQ guide

The *Good vision for life* website was designed to be an eye health 'hub' for Australians, fostering education and stories around eye health and good vision. We have built a comprehensive section to cover [Frequently Asked Questions](#) from members of the public.

This is a useful resource to direct patients to, and covers a broad range of topics around seeing an optometrist, eye health and eye conditions.

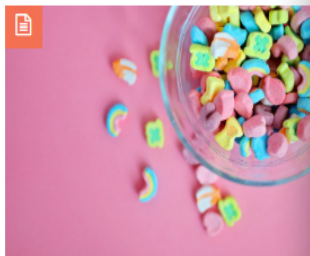
If you ever have any suggestions for this list, please [contact us](#).

Our stories are your stories

We regularly create [news content](#) around eye health which we distribute via our social platforms, as well as directly to consumers' inboxes via electronic mail.

These stories are designed to be shared by you, our members, for your patients, so please feel free to share as you wish. You may choose to feature them in your own electronic newsletters, or simply share the story links via your Facebook page.

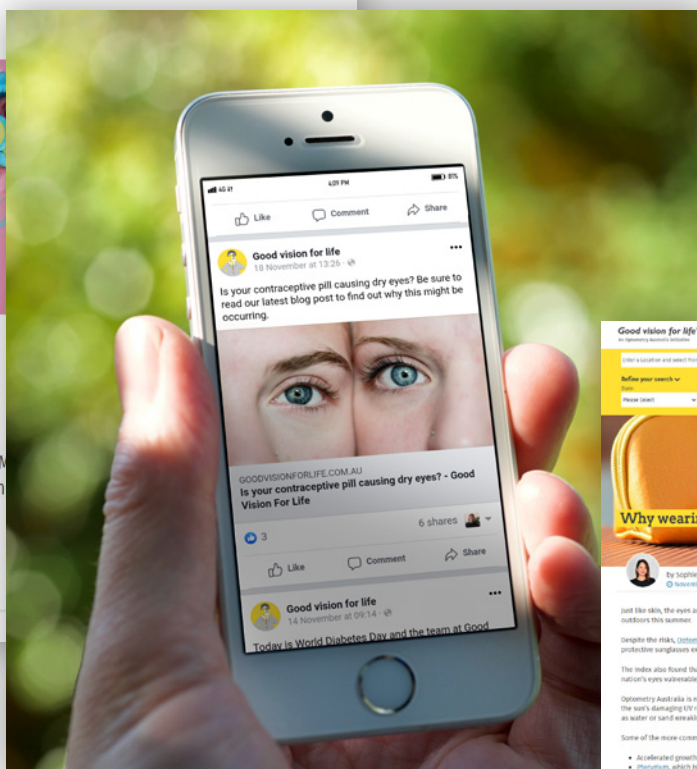
Recent Stories



Don't be blinded by sugar

December 3, 2020

2020 Australian of the Year Dr James M... is urging the community to start taking sugar intake seriously....
[Read More »](#)



Good vision for life
an optometry australia resource

Home > Vision > Better Vision > Vision Problems > Visiting Your Optometrist > Stories

After calculation and search results: 0 results. 0 items. Update your options. Opened 0 of 0 items.

Refine your search by: Category: All Categories. Subcategory: All Subcategories. Screen/Device: All Screen/Devices. Please select. Please select. Please select. Please select. [Search]

Why wearing sunglasses is vital to maintaining good vision for life

By Sophie Kohn, National Professional Services Advisor, Optometry Australia
November 15, 2020

Just like skin, the eyes are susceptible to sunburn, which is why it's vital Australians wear UV protective sunglasses when outdoors this summer.

Despite the risks, Optometry Australia's 2020 Vision Index revealed that almost one in 10 Australians do not know UV protective sunglasses exist, whilst 30 per cent believe they are unnecessary.

The index also found that just over half (54%) of Australians own a pair of UV protective sunglasses - leaving 42% of the nation's eyes vulnerable to sun damage.

Optometry Australia is reminding people of all ages not to underestimate the importance of protecting their eyes against the sun's damaging UV rays, with long term exposure to direct ultraviolet (UV) light from the sun and reflective surfaces such as water or sand increasing havoc on eyes.

Some of the more common side effects of excessive UV exposure include:

- Accelerated growth of cataracts
- Pterygia, which is a fleshy tissue growth on the white part of the eye
- Cancer around the eyelid margin or conjunctiva

To avoid developing these conditions and to protect eye health, Australians are being urged to wear UV protective sunglasses at all times when outdoors, not just the hours to peak UV exposure period during summer.

It's important Australians understand that UV radiation can cause damage near round, with the majority of Australians (78%) believing it is unnecessary to wear sunglasses during winter, whilst only 28% wear UV protected sunglasses during the cooler months.

Though the majority of Australians are familiar with the SunSmart mantra 'Slip-Slop-Slap-Screen', many are unaware that their eyes are just as susceptible to sunburn as their skin.

In Australia, we are exposed to some of the highest levels of UV in the world and our eyes are at risk of developing serious issues when left unprotected. Not wearing sunglasses is just as bad as heading out without a hat and sunscreen in the middle of summer. We especially need to empower parents in Australia to understand that UV protection of the eyes is vital from childhood.

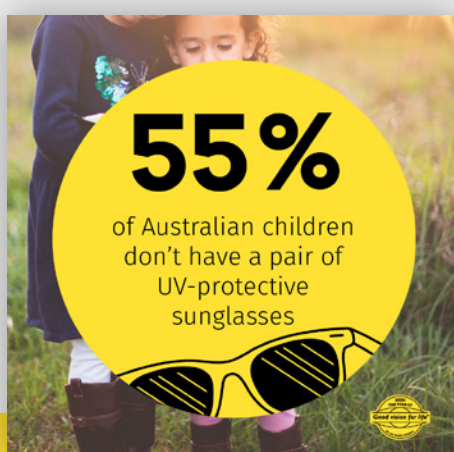
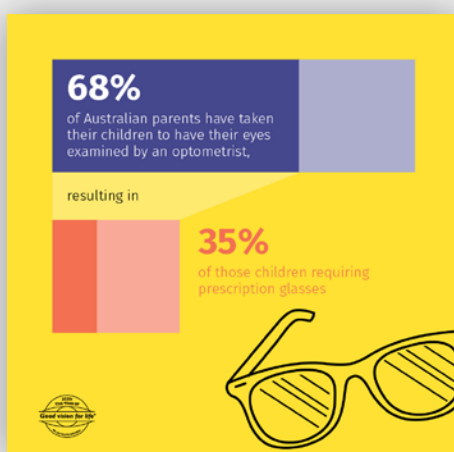
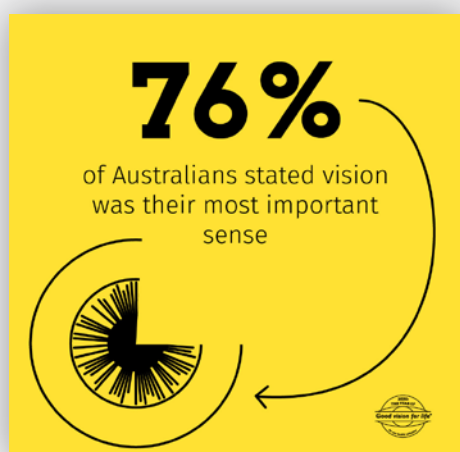
To maximise protection, Optometry Australia also recommends purchasing UV protective lenses with category three or four protection which will not only reduce glare, but also protect the eyes from Australia's harsh summer sun.

Close fitting wrap-around sunglasses or styles with wide temples (arms) provide the best protection for light entering from the side of the face. And of course, prescription options also exist for those who need to wear glasses to see clearly.

Infographics to use in your patient communications

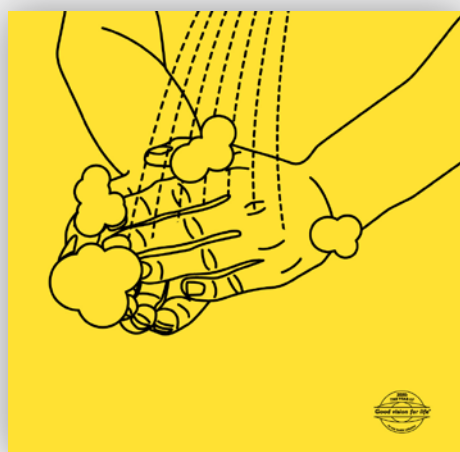
In January 2020 we released a research report about Australians' approach to eye health and their attitudes and habits with regard to their eyes. The research covered many topics such as glasses, contact lenses, eye conditions, disease, nutrition, workplace, driving, sport and digital behaviour.

This data has been used to develop a range of media and consumer-friendly talking points for your use. You can access the [full report](#) and [download these infographics](#).



Suite of COVID-19 social media posts for your use

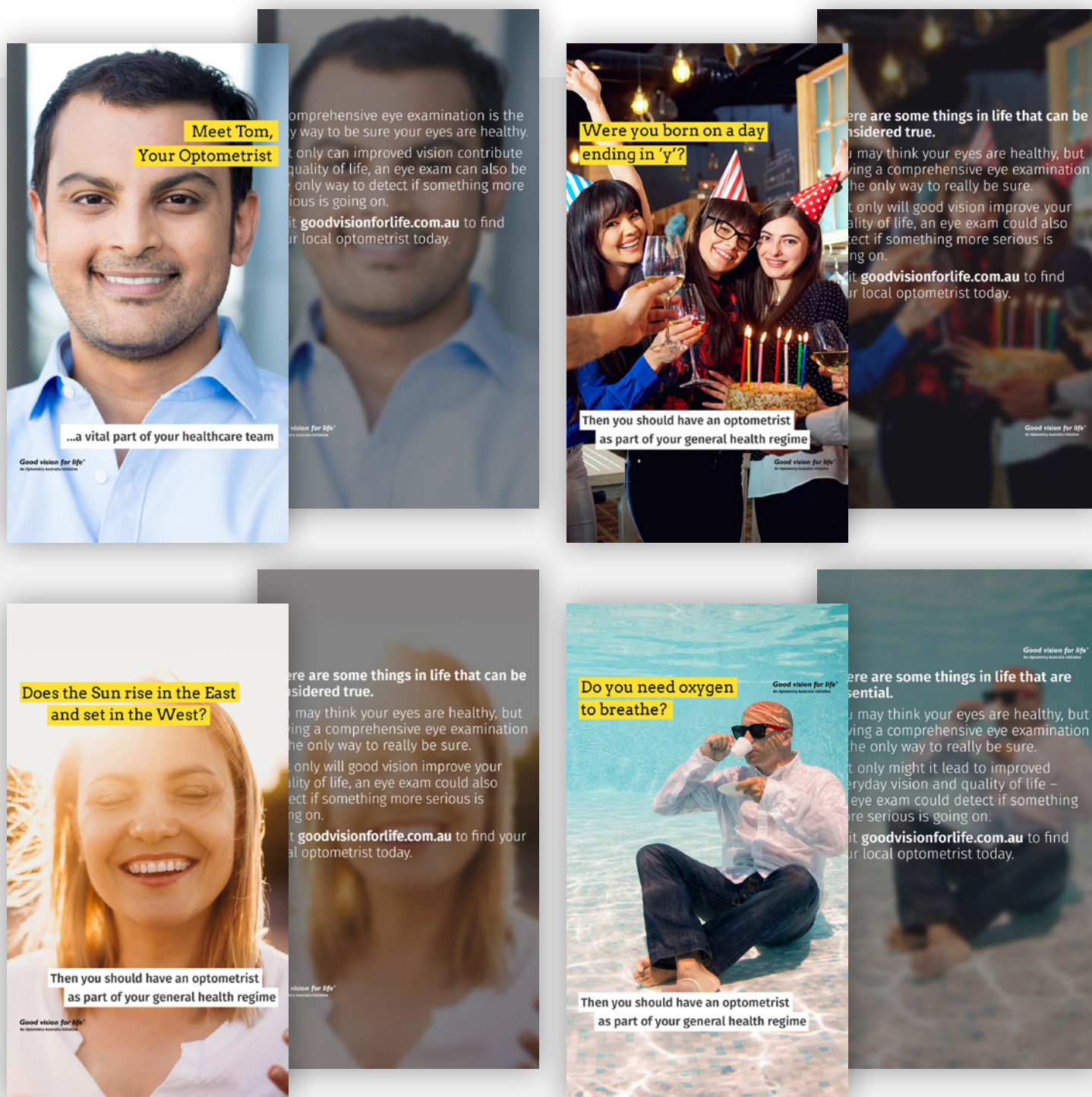
In addition to the eye health infographic suite we have available, we have created a set of COVID-specific graphics for you and your practice to use and display as the need arises. [You can access these posts here.](#)



Current ads in market for your use

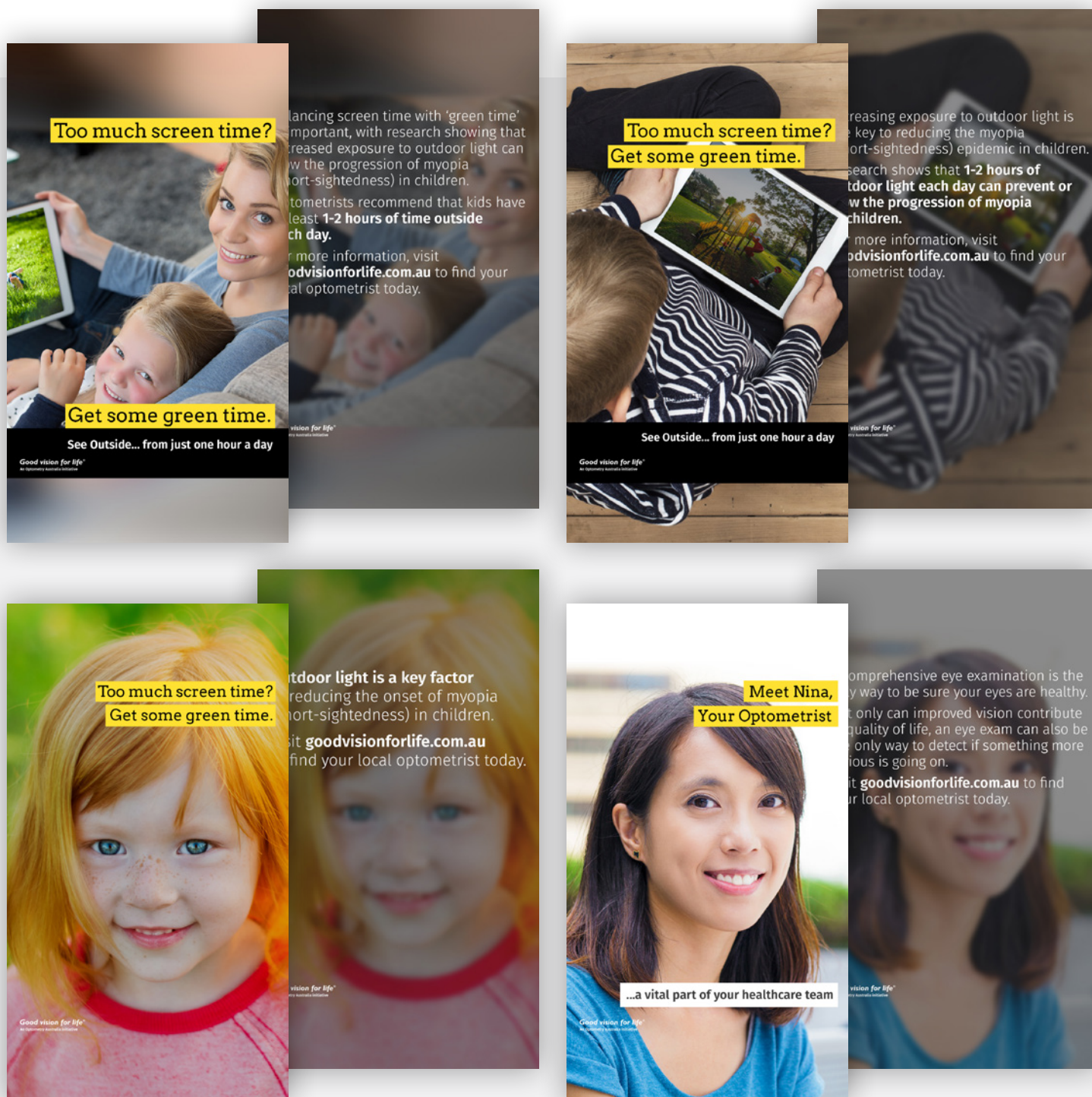
We have developed a new range of creative ads for use in market this year, and we hope you might choose to use them too. They are focused on the generic eye health messages of: Prevention and early detection; Children's vision; Your optometrist as part of your general health regime; and Screen time versus green time – all supported by the message to make an appointment with your local optometrist for an eye examination. Should you be interested in using these creatives with your practice branding, please contact us.

[You can access the ads here.](#)



Current ads in market for your use

[You can access the ads here.](#)



All of our members have access to download our free patient brochures and forms. These brochures are designed to be easily understood by your patients, summarising key facts about differing eye conditions and optical procedures. The downloadable format also allows you to send the brochures to your patients electronically, and should form part of your patient after-care protocol.

[illegible]

Suite of PowerPoint templates for your use

Have you been asked to give a presentation at a school, community group, or to nurses, GPs or other allied health professionals? We have created a suite of editable PowerPoint templates for you to use for these purposes. [You can access the PowerPoint library here.](#)

