



## MEDIA RELEASE

### Back to school: make the first test of the year an eye exam

**Wednesday 29 January, 2020:** With the start of the school year in sight, [Optometry Australia](#) is urging parents to get their children's eyes tested before heading back to the classroom.

With 2020 being the year of good vision for life, Optometry Australia remains concerned that [one in five children](#) will head back to school with an undetected vision problem, despite new research from Optometry Australia revealing 79 per cent of Australian parents believe their children have great eyesight.

According to *The 2020 Vision Index*, commissioned by Optometry Australia, 29 per cent of Australian parents do not believe they need to take their children to the optometrist until they are older, with the average age parents believe children need an eye examination being 5.8 years.

An additional 30 per cent of parents have never considered taking their children for an eye examination, despite children learning more from their vision than all other senses combined.

Only 68 per cent of parents have never taken their child for an eye examination, with the key motivators being complaints about poor vision (63 per cent) and eye injuries (45 per cent). Whilst 49 per cent of parents said they would be prompted to take their child for an eye check if their child was struggling at school.

Optometry Australia's Chief Clinical Officer, Luke Arundel said it's important for parents to take their children for an eye examination before school starts to give kids the best chance at success in academic, sporting and social development.

"With three quarters of Australians stating that their vision is their most important sense, it's up to parents to make sure children's eyesight is looked after so they can reach their full potential."

Mr Arundel added, "Good vision is vital to the social and behavioural development of a child and the inability to see properly can severely impact their experiences in a classroom if left unattended. From having trouble reading something on the whiteboard, to concentrating, there are a range of ways vision problems can affect learning and confidence.

"And it's not just inside the classroom where eyesight is impacted, children could also start to be excluded from sports or other group activities simply because they can't see to participate properly."

Optometry Australia recommends that all children have a full eye examination with an optometrist before starting school, and then regular visits as they progress through primary and secondary school, to help ensure good vision for life.

It's important for parents to also take the lead with eye health, with children often thinking their vision is completely fine, without knowing any different.

**Some signs of vision problems in children can include:**

- Noticeable tilting or turning of the head when the child is looking at something
- Frequent blinking or rubbing of the eyes
- Red or watery eyes
- Difficulty reading, such as skipping and confusing words, and holding a book very close while reading
- Complaints of headaches and blurred or double vision
- Squinting or having difficulty recognising things or people in the distance
- One eye turning in or out while the other points straight ahead

Parents are also being advised that many conditions such as those which affect binocular vision (how the eyes work together as a team) can be treated with simple eye exercises and may not need to be corrected with prescription glasses.

For more information on eye health in children and tips on how to protect vision, parents can visit [goodvisionforlife.com.au](http://goodvisionforlife.com.au).

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Optometry Australia is the peak professional body for optometrists. Representing eight out of every 10 Australian-based optometrists, Optometry Australia's focus is to lead and advance the profession of optometry by putting eye-health front and centre of Australian health care.