

# Mapping UNSW Impact Global Development

<b>Primary SDG</b>	<b>3: GOOD HEALTH AND WELLBEING</b>
<b>Broad theme</b>	Helping provide better eye care in PNG
<b>Research</b>	Using information from a country-wide survey to build up eye care facilities and workers in PNG areas where vision impairment is highest
<b>Impact region</b>	Papua New Guinea
<b>Faculty</b>	Science
<b>School/Institute</b>	Brien Holden Vision Institute
<b>Academics</b>	Dr Anthea Burnett, Dr Ling Lee
<b>Project partners</b>	Fred Hollows Foundation - funding of \$353,000 which finished 2016; PNG Eye Care
<b>Related SDGs</b>	10: Reduced Inequalities 5: Gender Equality

## Elevator pitch

A comprehensive survey has helped Brien Holden and partners identify a clear need for eye care infrastructure, training and equipment across PNG that will help limit some of the worst cases of blindness and vision impairment in the world.

## The Challenge: What are the rates of blindness and vision impairment in PNG and what can be done?

The survey conducted by Brien Holden showed that PNG has some of the worst rates of blindness and diabetic-caused blindness in the world. There is a lack of awareness among the population about available services and treatment options, and there is a lack of infrastructure and people to provide the eye care needed. Stigma around the wearing of glasses is also common, especially among women.

## UNSW's solution: Provide eye care infrastructure, training and equipment

Out of the 4,800 people surveyed 5.6% were blind, 7.8% had diabetes, and half of those with diabetes reported vision impairment. Rates of blindness were 11% among women in the highlands, mainly due to trauma or violent events. The results show a clear need to provide PNG people with spectacles and cataract surgery, and a clear absence of eye care providers and specialists.

To help Brien Holden proposes collaborating with local organisations and eye care providers to develop better patient pathways for those with diabetes, and to provide infrastructure and training workshops to create the workforce needed. This includes training local health care providers, establishing a network of eye care services (as they did in their Indigenous Australia research project), and providing essential equipment.

## The Impact: Help PNG people with diabetes to better vision

With further funding, Brien Holden can build an eye care workforce for patients with diabetes in PNG. They can also help establish patient referral pathways and service delivery, train students and health care providers, and provide much-needed equipment. Their efforts will reduce blindness and vision impairment across PNG for the long term, creating a better quality of life for those assisted and increasing their ability to contribute to local and national economies.

### **Researcher**

Dr Anthea Burnett is Research Manager at the Brien Holden Vision Institute (Public Health) and a visiting fellow at the School of Optometry and Vision Science. Anthea is responsible for the design and implementation of numerous research programs across the Asia Pacific. She was inspired to help the visually impaired in PNG when visiting the country in 2009.

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