

# Media Release

8 October 2009

## Restored vision helps grandfather pursue lifelong dream

At 73, Sid Powley is not a typical university student but the Visual Arts undergraduate at Victoria University says he's embracing campus life and the opportunity to hone his artistic skills.

"Whenever I see a white surface I just want to draw on it, to put my mark on it somehow. Art allows me to express myself," Sid said.

Two years ago however Sid was forced to abandon his art after blurry and distorted vision made it difficult to focus. Sidney was diagnosed with wet age-related macular degeneration (AMD), a severe form of the disease characterised by rapid central vision loss.

"I was shattered. My first thought was, 'if I go blind, I'll no longer have my art,' " he said.

Sid was treated with regular injections into the eye of Lucentis, a drug shown to stop the progression of wet AMD, and in some cases improve a patients vision. The treatment improved his sight dramatically.

Professor Robyn Guymer, head of Macular Research at the Centre for Eye Research Australia (CERA), and an ophthalmologist at the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital, said Sid is fortunate he was diagnosed early.

"Blurred or distorted vision is an important sign of wet AMD. Unfortunately, some patients ignore the signs and have suffered irreversible vision loss by the time the condition is diagnosed," Professor Guymer said.

"While there's no cure for wet AMD, the good news is that there are several treatments that are very effective when applied early. That's why early diagnosis is so important," she said.

For Sid, the improvement to his vision has been life changing, allowing him to fulfil his lifelong dream of studying art.

"If you or someone you love is experiencing changes in vision, don't ignore the signs. Book an eye test, it could save your sight," he said.

World Sight Day (8 October 2009) aims to raise the profile of the causes of blindness and vision impairment.

AMD is the leading cause of severe vision loss in Australia and its estimated one in seven people over the age of fifty are affected by the condition.

CERA conducts research into the leading causes of blindness. It's associated with Melbourne University's Department of Ophthalmology and is located at the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital. The Eye and Ear Hospital is a Victoria-wide specialist public hospital caring for more than 180,000 Australians each year.

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