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New Zealand unveils first mobile optometry clinic

June 14, 2022 | News

Cost is a significant barrier to accessing eye healthcare in New Zealand



New Zealand's first custom-built mobile optometry service has been launched at the University of Auckland in a bid to improve access to eye healthcare.

The Vision Bus Aotearoa is a state-of-the-art comprehensive optometry clinic that allows University of Auckland staff and student optometrists to deliver full eye exams onsite at schools and other locations.

It recently started visiting south Auckland schools, marae and refugee centres, offering eye tests and treatments, including glasses, at no cost to patients.

Professor Steven Dakin at the School of Optometry and Vision Science has championed the idea over the past five years only seeing it come to fruition this year. Cost is a significant barrier to accessing eye healthcare in New Zealand.

“For adults, the model in Aotearoa is that the customer pays but, in Australia appointments are subsidised,” Dakin says.

In Australia, a national eye health survey has found the most common causes of visual impairment are uncorrected refractive errors (63 percent), where people don’t get the glasses they need, or cataracts, where people don’t get the surgery they need.

“We don’t have the same data in Aotearoa, but the situation is likely to be serious here,” Dakin says.

The School of Optometry and Vision Science plans to lead a national survey for Aotearoa New Zealand.