“I believe that the basic attribute of mankind is to look after each other”

Professor Fred Hollows

Who was Fred Hollows?

Fred Hollows was an eye doctor who spent his life helping those who couldn’t afford, or access, basic eye care. He worked really hard to end avoidable blindness and improve the health of Indigenous Australians.

In the late 1960s and 1970s Fred was shocked to discover that Aboriginal Australians were suffering from some of the worst eye diseases he had ever seen. So he decided to do something about it. He travelled with a team of 80 doctors to 465 remote communities, helping more than 60,000 Indigenous people and giving away over 10,000 pair of glasses. This was just the beginning of Fred’s long campaign to improve health services for Aboriginal people.

In the 1980s and 90s, Fred discovered that millions of people in poor communities around the world were also going blind because of eye disease. Most of them were suffering from cataract blindness, an eye disease that causes the lens of the eye to become cloudy and fuzzy. Luckily, cataract blindness is easy to fix. Eye doctors just take out the old cloudy lens and replace it with a new plastic one, allowing people to see again. Fred decided to raise enough money to build lens factories in Eritrea and Nepal to reduce the cost of these operations from hundreds of dollars to just $25, so that millions of people around the world could have their sight restored.

Fred was named Australian of the Year in 1990 for his efforts to help others.
“You really only accomplish yourself when you get involved with other people’s welfare.”

Professor Fred Hollows

Why was Fred an Australian Legend?

Fred was famous for helping people in need, particularly people who were sick and poor. He believed that everyone in the world should have the same access to health services, no matter if they were a King or a Queen or just an ordinary person in the street.

He worked really hard to improve health care for Indigenous Australians living in remote outback communities and he drastically reduced the cost of cataract surgery, one of the simplest ways to treat avoidable blindness.

Fred is proof that one person can help make the world a better place.

Where is Fred now?

Fred died at age 63 on February 10, 1993. He was buried at Bourke, a country town in far western NSW. Fred had a special relationship with Bourke and made many lifelong friends there. Every year thousands of people visit Fred’s graveside to pay their respects to this wonderful Australian.

How is Fred’s dream being kept alive?

Fred Hollows spent most of his life working to end avoidable blindness and improve the health of Indigenous Australians. In 1992, five months before Fred died, he set up The Fred Hollows Foundation to ensure that his dream of restoring sight continued after he was gone.

The Fred Hollows Foundation has worked in more than 40 countries around the world and has restored sight to millions of people. For just $25, The Foundation can help give someone the gift of sight. For more information on Fred and The Foundation go to www.hollows.org.au