

1.2 Million Australians Ignore Their Failing Eyesight

Research shows that Australians are in denial when it comes to looking after their eyesight

Midnight 24 October, 2010 – Nationwide research conducted on behalf of Budget Eyewear shows that many Australians are in denial when it comes to their failing eyesight – in fact more than 1.2 millionⁱ Australians are knowingly going about everyday life with failing eyesight. And with the ageing population projected to dramatically increase in coming years, this trend is set to worsen as the overall level of apathy toward personal wellbeing deepens.

“More and more people are putting off getting their eyes tested,” said Grant Fisher, Head of Optometry at Budget Eyewear. “Two of the main reasons for this, according to our own research, is that people simply don’t think they have time or because they don’t want to spend the moneyⁱ.”

In reality, eye care has never been so affordable and simple. In Australia, Medicare offers one comprehensive eye test every two yearsⁱⁱ. Yet over 33% of respondents surveyed on this topic by independent research firm Pure Profile, had no idea about the existence of this Medicare benefit, with the lack of awareness most predominant among 18-24 year oldsⁱⁱⁱ. A further 20% had heard of the benefit, but weren’t sure how it worked, or applied to themⁱⁱⁱ.

“I was shocked at the statistics, it’s really very sad that so many people are knowingly walking around with poor vision, for no reason,” said Cath Armstrong, founder of Cheapskates.com.au. “Certainly in 2010 cost really isn’t a barrier to receiving quality eye care.”

The research also revealed that 54% Australians would rather spend \$10 (the maximum out of pocket expense for an eye test thanks to Medicare) on a small gift for a loved one while only 9% would put the money toward their eye careⁱⁱⁱ. And, 27% of male respondents would rather “head to the pub for a schooner with a mate” than put the \$10 toward eye careⁱⁱⁱ, further indicating the overall lack of concern about eye care in Australia.

“Not having an eye test every two years, is really neglecting your eye health and can have an impact on everyday activities like driving, work productivity, playing sports, reading and socialising with friends.” said Mr Fisher. “Australians wearing glasses have a greater choice in the range of products and services available to them. It’s important to get the right lens and frame that suits your lifestyle and, doesn’t break the wallet. Your Optometrist can help you with a comprehensive eye test and, assist you in selecting a pair of glasses or contact lenses that suits your lifestyle and your budget.”

“With summer on the way, we think about sunscreen and our skin. What most people don’t know is that our eyes are more delicate than our skin”, said Mr Fisher. “This fact alone, makes it so important to get your eyes checked, make sure they’re healthy and, if you wear glasses that the prescription is up to date. Also, that you have the right sunglasses with the best UV protection from the Australian sun. Your Optometrist can help with all of this.”

Additional research findings from the surveyⁱⁱⁱ include:

- South Australia has the most vision correction wearers at 81% - over 10% more than the national average;
- The Australian Capital Territory has the highest level of awareness about the Medicare eye test rebate;
- 97% of Australians over 65 years old wear vision correction while 47% of people from 18-34 years old wear vision correction;
- Tasmanians are least likely to put an extra \$10 (the out of pocket expense for an eye test) toward eye glasses. Instead, they are most likely to spend this money on small gift for a loved one;
- People in the Northern Territory are most likely to spend that extra \$10 on a schooner with a mate than put the money towards eye care;
- Our cousins from across the ditch don’t fare much better when it comes to caring for their eyes
 - 70% of those surveyed had no idea about how much an eye test was; and,
- 30% of New Zealanders would preferred to buy a new pair of shoes, than invest the \$70 on an eye test!

ENDS

Notes to editors:

- Interview opportunities are available with Cath Armstrong at Cheapstakes and Grant Fisher
- For further information please contact: Rebekka Thompson-Jones at Woosh, tel: 02 8001 8818 or 0401 090 034, email TJ@wilkinson-group.com.au or Cait Tynan at Budget Eyewear on cait.tynan@luxottica.com.au or 0421273336

About Budget Eyewear

With a combined chain of over 110 outlets throughout Australia and New Zealand, Budget Eyewear a Luxottica retail brand company, has been in operation since 1977. Budget Eyewear is commitment to satisfying its customers through providing quality eyewear at value-for-money prices.

About Luxottica Group S.p.A.

Luxottica Group is a leader in premium fashion, luxury and sports eyewear, with over 6,300 optical and sun retail stores in North America, Asia-Pacific, China, South Africa and Europe and a strong and well-balanced brand portfolio. Luxottica's key house brands include Ray-Ban, the best known sun eyewear brand in the world, Oakley, Vogue, Persol, Oliver Peoples, Arnette and REVO, while license brands include Bvlgari, Burberry, Chanel, Dolce & Gabbana, Donna Karan, Polo Ralph Lauren, Prada, Salvatore Ferragamo, Tiffany and Versace. In addition to a global wholesale network covering 130 countries, the Group manages leading retail brands such as LensCrafters and Pearle Vision in North America, OPSM and Laubman & Pank in Australasia, LensCrafters in Greater China and Sunglass Hut globally. The Group's products are designed and manufactured in six Italy-based manufacturing plants, two wholly-owned plants in China and a sports sunglass production facility in the U.S. In 2009, Luxottica Group posted consolidated net sales of Euro 5.1 billion. Additional information about the Group is available at www.luxottica.com.

ⁱ The Leading Edge, 2010 research commissioned by Budget Eyewear

ⁱⁱ <http://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/public/claims/what-cover.jsp>

ⁱⁱⁱ Pure Profile research looking at the Australian population, commissioned by Budget Eyewear, 2010