

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**DATE**

Tuesday 20 May 2025

**Local Lions Club vision project a clear success for students**

A community-driven project led by the Merino Digby Lions Club has proving to be a resounding success, delivering critical eye health screenings to students across the Glenelg Shire.

The initiative was funded through SharkPitch 2024, an annual community giving event hosted by United Way Glenelg that invites local changemakers to pitch bold ideas in front of a virtual live audience of donors.

Thanks to the passionate advocacy of Shirley Menz from Merino Digby Lions Club, more than \$20,000 was raised on the night to fund the project. The funds allowed the Lions Club to purchase all the required equipment—including a vision screening camera, charts, laptop, printer, and paper—to kickstart free Vision Screenings across the Southwest of Victoria.

This week, Merino Digby Lions Club visited Narrawong Primary School to conduct the vision screening technology in action. The portable camera and screening equipment is already making a big impact, with all schools across the Glenelg Shire opting in to participate in the screening.

Early results are compelling—20% of students screened have been referred for further assessment with an optometrist, highlighting the importance of early intervention and access to screening in rural communities.

"Merino Digby Lions Club's initiative is to conduct vision screenings for all primary school children in our area. With nearly 20% of kids facing vision issues, early detection is crucial for enhancing their educational success and social acceptance."

"This project has truly been a team effort, with 15 dedicated volunteers — 13 of whom are Lions Club members. Knowing we're helping children see more clearly and potentially shaping their learning journey for the better is incredibly rewarding."

Nicole Carr, Executive Officer of United Way Glenelg, reflected on the personal and community impact. "Speaking from personal experience, if this technology had been available when I was in primary school, it would have made a huge difference. I wasn't diagnosed with severe myopia until I was a teenager."

"Early detection is critical—especially for young learners who may not realise they're struggling to see clearly, it means that myopia can not only be corrected but slowed down and limited."

"This project is a perfect example of how SharkPitch brings practical, community-led solutions to life."

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Expressions of Interest for SharkPitch 2025 open this July. Local organisations with big ideas to benefit the Glenelg Shire are encouraged to apply and be part of this unique community fundraising event. For more information, visit [unitedwayglenelg.com.au](http://unitedwayglenelg.com.au).

*Photo: Portland Lions Member Jan Hamblin and Narrawong Primary School student Ella Pitman.*

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