

OPENING EYES

HUGH R TAYLOR
Preventor of Blindness

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Large format

Over 230 illustrations

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Senior ophthalmology student, Dr Hugh Ringland Taylor, was in the field with the National Trachoma and Eye Health Program with Professor Fred Hollows in the 1970s. Professor Hugh Ringland Taylor AC decided to change the course of his life in his late fifties, in 2006. Soon, he was the Harold Mitchell Professor of Indigenous Eye Health, at the University of Melbourne, closing the gap for vision some more and attacking trachoma, object total elimination of Australia's 'sandy blight', *Chlamydia trachomatis* extinct.

True, he had studied trachoma in five continents. He'd even written the first book on it to be published for decades, *Trachoma: a blinding scourge from the Bronze Age to the 21st century*, his update covering a revolution in eye health delivery and blindness prevention. He had top-drawer credibility at WHO and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness. But this goal required diplomacy, lobbying, connecting people, community liaison and listening, advertising, the magic of meeting AFL legends in the flesh, education, fund raising, financial management, and dealing with whatever arises. Walls between medical disciplines, around bureaucracies, state borders, wherever, are there to be climbed. Readers will

be surprised by what a public health campaign involves and can achieve.

For 13 years, he was a researcher of trachoma, onchocerciasis and other causes of blindness, at Johns Hopkins University's famed Wilmer Eye Research Institute. His work on the effect of a band of ultra-violet light on the eyes of the watermen who collect crustaceans and molluscs in Chesapeake Bay, had ripple effects in China, Taiwan, South Korea and Singapore. By law, schoolchildren there must spend 60 minutes a day outside, a myopia prevention measure.

In the 1990s Hugh was the Ringland Anderson Professor of Ophthalmology at the University of Melbourne. He was the founding director of the Centre for Eye Research Australia, CERA, now an international leader.

Hugh lives in Melbourne with his wife, Dr Elizabeth Dax AM. They have four adult children and seven grandchildren.

