

Gabi Hollows

Public face of the Fred Hollows Foundation

Gabi Hollows is the public face of the Fred Hollows Foundation, an organisation formed to continue the work of her late husband, Professor Fred Hollows. Dedicated to the world-wide prevention of blindness, Fred Hollows worked tirelessly throughout Australia, Nepal, Thailand, Mexico, Africa and many other countries.

Gabi first met Fred Hollows in 1970s when training as an Orthoptist. She graduated in 1972 and after working in several hospitals, joined the National Trachoma and Eye Health Program in 1976. The program was initiated and led by Fred Hollows and sponsored by the Royal Australian College of Ophthalmologists and the Australian Government.

For three years, Gabi and Fred worked with Australian Aboriginal people visiting over 465 remote Aboriginal communities.

Fred's words best sum up Gabi's incredible abilities and contribution to his work: *'I discovered what an unusual person Gabi was early on, when I worked with her in a blacks' camp in the Territory. I was examining eyes and grading for trachoma; Gabi was taking visual fields and I can tell you which is the harder job - hers. You have to deal with linguistic and cultural differentials and be patient and pleasant if you hope to achieve anything. Gabi must have examined two hundred people that day, and she was as soothing and agreeable to the two hundredth as she had been to the first. I noticed something else: Gabi's tone of voice, manner and body language didn't change, whether she was dealing with the station manager or the oldest, most withered Aborigine in the camp. That kind of innate goodness is rare.'* Fred Hollows

When Fred became sick with cancer, Gabi exuded Fred's vibrant spirit to help build The Fred Hollows Foundation, while still running a household of young children and taking care of her husband.

Since Fred Hollows' death in 1993, Gabi has worked tirelessly for The Fred Hollows Foundation. She is a Founding Director of the Board, Patron of the Miracle Club and the public face of The Foundation. Five weeks after Fred's death Gabi travelled to Vietnam to reassure Vietnamese Ophthalmologists that The Foundation would continue Fred's work there. Following her earlier work in the field, Gabi remains passionate about and committed to The Foundation's Indigenous



Health Program.

Through her work with The Fred Hollows Foundation, Gabi has been awarded an Advance Australia Award for Community Service, a Paul Harris Fellow by Rotary International and been named as one of Australia's 100 Living National Treasures. In 2003 she was awarded a Centenary Medal by the Australian Government.

Gabi is passionate about children and education and has a close association with Rotary too. She is Patron of other organisations including Blenheim House, (the oldest house in Randwick), Cottage Hospital at Lightning Ridge and The LifeForce Foundation (cancer support).

In 1996 Gabi married lawyer and friend John Balazs. Gabi is still known as Gabi Hollows.

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