I added, "We would like you to manage the phone, advise anyone using it too long or too often to reduce their usage". I produced a badge saying "Communications Supervisor" and she was quite taken aback. She thanked us and proceeded to watch that phone like a hawk … she controlled the usage as if her life depended on it … she NEVER herself used the phone again! Her productivity went through the ceiling! What's more, she was delighted to have the power and responsibility and to be recognised for her contribution.

In 1993 I designed and patented a highly successful bifocal contact lens and was a key member of the engineering team that built the tooling and multi-axis lathing systems to produce the lens. This development attracted international press and television coverage. The bifocal design and subsequent engineering design was awarded a Foundation for Research, Science and Technology grant. I must acknowledge the incredible contributions made by John, Denis Malone, John Adam and Lawrence O'Connell and the team of very clever scientists and engineers at Industrial Research Ltd (formerly the DSIR) who under Denis Malone's expert leadership completed a degree of engineering brilliance that resulted in a successful production system.

On a much sadder note, in 2019 Denis died from Lou Gehrig's disease – an advanced form of motor neuron disease. I was a speaker and pall bearer at his funeral. A brilliant mind and very close friend no longer with us. RIP.


The New Zealand Herald

Change of focus on contact lens

The news of the Bifocal lens and I hit the front page of The NZ Herald and television both here in NZ and across the globe.

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SCIENCE & MEDICINE - Scope

Breakthrough On Contact Lens

April 25, 1993

A small New Zealand firm says it has produced an improved bifocal contact lens that would fit most human eyes, an achievement that has eluded large companies dominating the contact lens market. Of the makers of thousands of different types of contact lens products and brands, only five companies produce bifocal lenses, and only a tiny percentage of people's eyes can adapt to them, said Ian Handricks, a partner of Hirstlens, the company that produces the lenses. "The bifocal we are producing is available in any power, in any additional power, in any reading script, in any material," he said. Most people using contact lenses have to surrender them in middle age when they begin to need reading glasses. The bifocal lenses are undergoing clinical trials at the moment. Hirstlens has been manufacturing contact lenses for more than 50 years.


Ian Handricks

New Zealand Optics

Bifocal project now subject to case study

The Horizon Bifocal project has raised a lot of interested within government circles and has been chosen as one of two case studies to be presented to the Minister of Health and his department.

Partial funding of the project has come from a $109,000 grant from the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology with Hirstlens contributing an equal amount.

The Horizon bifocal is a one-piece translating/ alternating non-aspheric lens which does not employ diffractive optics. The design concept allows for a spherical powered bifocal lens to be made in all materials, soft or hard, and has been designed to be available in any reasonable distance power and any add power.

Proprietary tooling and software design is now in place giving an opportunity to manufacture early trials.

"Initial production results have shown that mathematical predictions of shape and form are possible and indeed surpass the best expectations. Limited clinical trials have begun and results are expected to show a pattern before the end of the year," said Mr John Shennan, Director of Hirstlens.