From There to Here: A story of partnerships in Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Eye Health

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Key Partnerships
- VAHS
- VACCHO
- RWAV
- IEH
- RDWA South Australia
- PEHET (BHV, AHCSA, CEFH, OA)
- DHHS
- YES/VASSS
- Over 20 ACCHO’s across Victoria, NSW, TAS and SA

The Australian College of Optometry
- Our Vision is to achieve world leading eye health outcomes for all
- Our Mission is to improve the eye health and well being of communities through innovative, partnership, and leadership in clinical optometry services, research and education

1940
- Aboriginal Liaison Officer
- First Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person employed by the ACO
- Role to strengthen and build the ACO’s engagement with community
- Helped with building of trust between the ACO’s eye care staff and the Aboriginal communities in which the ACO provided services

1985
- Victorian Eyecare Service
- Victorian Government funded, statewide, eyecare and glasses subsidy program for people on pension and concession cards, and Aboriginal people
- Dedicated ACO sites in Carlton, Fitzroy (VAHS), Frankston, Dandenong, Broadmeadows, East Reservoir, and Brunswick
- A network of local private practices ensures statewide availability

1997
- Outreach
- Provides services to patients in community locations; for people experiencing homelessness, residential aged care facilities, Supported Residential Services, refugees/asylum seeker sites, and care for people with disabilities
- Impact: improved access to eye care for people experiencing disadvantage
- The provision of services to outreach locations across the state further enhances access to VES locations

1998
- Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS)
- A short course in eye health was developed in partnership with VACCHO and the Aboriginal Eye Health Committee, between 1998-2001
- Held at the ACO, and at regional centres in Echuca, Ballarat and Winmalee
- In 2009, the ACO was involved in an accredited course for Aboriginal Eye Health Workers developed by VACCHO and Vision2020Australia

2010
- Visiting Optometrist Scheme (VOS)
- A Commonwealth initiative
- Eye care services to ACCHO’s across regional Victoria and greater Melbourne, as well as community Aboriginal sites across Melbourne
- ACO continues its involvement through a partnership with RWAV
- New partnership with RDWA in South Australia
- Ongoing ACO involvement is around community need, with sites encouraged to develop relationships with local providers

2013
- Aboriginal Liaison Officer
- First Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person employed by the ACO
- Role to strengthen and build the ACO’s engagement with community
- Helped with building of trust between the ACO’s eye care staff and the Aboriginal communities in which the ACO provided services

2017
- Provision of Eye Health Equipment and Training (PEHET)
- The ACO is involved in a project to provide the right service in the right place.
- Role to strengthen and build the ACO’s engagement with community
- Helped with building of trust between the ACO’s eye care staff and the Aboriginal communities in which the ACO provided services

2018
- National Close the Gap Conference
- Roadmap stakeholder consultation groups
- Victorian Vision Initiative steering committee
- Statewide meetings
- Victorian Aboriginal Eye Health Committee - Project Period April 2017 to June 2020
- Eye Health and Optometry Australia (EHOA)
- Eye & Ear / VAHS Ophthalmology Service
- Provision of Eye Health Equipment and Training (PEHET)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with diabetes

Key Involvements
- Vision2020 Australia Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Committee
- Roundtable Project
- Regional eye health steering committees across states
- Eye & Ear / VAHS Ophthalmology Service
- Provision of Eye Health Equipment and Training (PEHET)
- Victorian Aboriginal Eye Health Committee - Statewide meeting
- Victorian Vision Initiative steering committee
- Roadmap stakeholder consultation groups

20 years after the clinic at WWS was established, the ACO entered into a partnership with the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital and VAHS to create a comprehensive and integrated eye care service at WWS.

The ACO continues to be involved in an accredited course for Aboriginal Eye Health Workers developed by VACCHO and Vision2020Australia.