

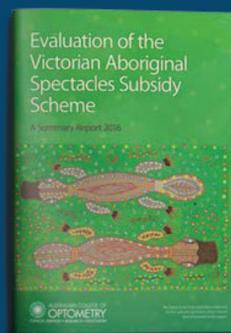
THE VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL SPECTACLES SUBSIDY SCHEME 'STRENGTHENING AND SUSTAINING ACCESS'

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The Victorian Aboriginal Spectacles Subsidy Scheme (VASSS) is a Victorian Government initiative that aims to improve access to high quality visual aids (eg. glasses/contact lens) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Victorians, and in doing so, contribute to closing the gap in eye health between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians. The VASSS is underpinned by the Victorian Eyecare Service, a glasses subsidy program for pension and concession card holders in Victoria and is funded by the Victorian Government. The VASSS has been in operation for over 10 years and has provided almost 20,000 visual aids over this time. The VASSS has played a key role in increasing uptake of eyecare services in Victoria and assisted in closing the gap in eyecare across the state. The ACO aims to demonstrate the impact that the VASSS has in contributing to a holistic model of eyecare, and to showcase the ACO's best practice, culturally appropriate model.

AIMS OF THE VASSS

- To provide high quality visual aids for Aboriginal Victorians
- To eliminate cost as a barrier to obtaining glasses
- Ensure accessibility and availability across Victoria
- To encourage people to get their eyes tested, which helps to identify other eye health issues, and hence to help close the gap in eye health for Aboriginal people
- To empower the health and well-being of Aboriginal Victorians through good eye health.



CO-DESIGN OF THE VASSS

- Aboriginal Elders were involved in the selection of frames available in the VASSS
- Working in partnership with Aboriginal Victorian stakeholders on the structure and operation of the VASSS to ensure community expectations are satisfied.



PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships are essential for the best practice VASSS model in Victoria for example:

- The partnerships between ACO optometrists and staff at the ACCHOs and other health services, built over repeated visits
- Working with private practice to ensure local, community level access
- 22 year partnership between the ACO and Victorian Aboriginal Health Service in Fitzroy (VAHS)
- Involvement in regional eye health groups, and other stakeholder groups such as Vision2020A, Provision of Eye Health Equipment and Training Project
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholder representatives in our RAP Working Party to provide cultural guidance with our Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan.

PRINCIPLES FOR SUSTAINING AND STRENGTHENING THE VASSS – NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE

Now...

- Continue to work in partnership on best practice VASSS model
- Ongoing improvements and advocacy in partnership with Aboriginal stakeholders to ensure community needs are met
- Ongoing partnership work with key groups, including peak stakeholder groups such as Vision2020A, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, and the regional fundholder RWAV
- Strengthening cultural awareness of rural private practice optometrists
- Continue to actively participate in the regional eye health groups.

In the future

- Advocate for funding of VASSS to match population need
- Ongoing co-design and promotion of the program with Aboriginal organisations
- Continuing to build evidence base to inform VASSS planning
- Continued presence in regional eye health groups
- Support development of national spectacle subsidy scheme
- Assist in the training and upskilling of Aboriginal eye health workers
- Active participation in VASSS design and implementation beyond 2020.

VASSS LOCATIONS – STATEWIDE PROVIDER

Metropolitan, rural, regional and country locations



VASSS supply 2010-2020



2020 Data - Reduction in VASSS glasses supply due to decreased service delivery as a direct result of COVID-19.



 The Australian College of Optometry respectfully acknowledges the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we work. We pay our respects to their Elders – past, present and emerging. The Australian College of Optometry is committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society.