



*Minim Barreng*  
Indigenous Eye Health Unit  
Melbourne School of Population Health

# The Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision

The Unit has recently completed a major project investigating the 'barriers to the provision and utilisation of eye health services for Indigenous Australians' and the Federal Minister for Indigenous Health, the Hon Warren Snowdon, launched our report in Adelaide on 23 February.

'The Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision' report presents the findings of research consultations with over 370 participants in 21 locations across Australia, covering remote, regional and urban populations.

The consultations were conducted with clients and staff of Aboriginal Health Services, hospitals, eye health practitioners and government departments in all states and territories. Key stakeholders were involved in a series of workshops and meetings to develop and test solutions to address the barriers that limit access to eye care services.

The Roadmap outlines 42 interlocking recommendations to eliminate unnecessary vision loss for Indigenous Australians and has been presented to Australian Governments as a comprehensive package requiring full and immediate implementation.

## Outline of Recommendations

### Primary Eye Care as Part of Comprehensive Primary Health Care

To improve identification and referral for eye care needs from primary health care

Initiatives include: education programs for clinic staff; changes in Medicare health assessment items, Medicare funding for health retinal photography; update practice software.

### Indigenous Access to Eye Health Services

To enhance access to Aboriginal and mainstream eye services

Initiatives include: co-ordination with AHS; cultural safety in mainstream services; improved subsidised spectacle scheme; increase cataract surgery.

### Co-ordination

To improve co-ordination of eye care services and the successful navigation of referral pathway

Initiatives include: establish local co-ordination mechanisms; service directories and referral protocols; adequate staffing; introduce case management; encourage local partnerships.

### Eye Health Workforce

To increase availability and improve distribution of eye health workforce

Initiatives include: population-based service planning funds; improved visiting specialist services; including VOS and urban areas; bulk billing for MSOAP services; training in rural and Indigenous work.

### Elimination of Trachoma

To eliminate blinding Trachoma from Australia

Initiatives include: complete mapping of trachoma; implement SAFE strategy fully; monitor and evaluate.

### Monitoring and Evaluation

To capture and report information about progress and improvement of services and outcomes in Indigenous eye health

Initiatives include: manage local, state and national performance; collate existing data sources; create national benchmarks; develop and apply measures of service quality and self audit tools; ensure program evaluation.

## The Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision



### Full Report



March 2012

## Governance

To ensure that there is national delivery of 'Close the Gap for Vision'

Initiatives include: ensure local community engagement; links with Medicare locals, local hospitals networks; local state and national oversight to ensure comprehensive program delivery.

## Health Promotion and Awareness

To improve awareness and knowledge of eye health in communities to support self empowerment

Initiatives include: ensure eye health promotion and social marketing of services for eye care.

## Health Financing

To ensure adequate funding is allocated to 'Close the Gap for Vision'

Initiatives include: continue trachoma funding; \$68.5 million over 5 years of capped funding; program phased in over 4 years.

For full implementation of the Roadmap recommendations, support from all governments is needed to fund an additional \$68.25 million over the next five years.

The Roadmap concludes that with only this doubling of funding for Indigenous eye health, cataract surgery can increase seven times, diabetic examinations can increase five times and the use of glasses can increase 2.5 times.

Having presented the Roadmap to government we continue with advocacy and technical support to have these recommendations adopted and implemented.

We have the evidence, strategy and capacity to eliminate unnecessary vision loss for Indigenous Australians – it is now time to close the gap for vision.

The report can be accessed at [www.iehu.unimelb.edu.au](http://www.iehu.unimelb.edu.au).



Minister Warren Snowdon launching the Roadmap report in Adelaide



Participants in a focus group at VAHS



Stakeholder consultative workshop.



Photo with Mitchell Anjou, Justin Mohammed (Chair NACCHO), Hugh Taylor, Warren Snowdon and Andrea Boudville