

Welcome to the December 2021 edition of the Indigenous Eye Health (IEH) Newsletter

### Update from Professor Hugh Taylor - Director of Indigenous Eye Health

I have been struck with what a successful year we have had despite all the challenges and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns. Like all our Melbourne-based staff since March last year, so far I have been in the office for 35 days and worked from home over 360 days. Fortunately, we now have two staff in Alice Springs, two staff in Adelaide and one in Darwin. So in addition to all the email and Zoom meetings these staff have been able to do a lot of travel and community work.

I am really impressed with what the team has been able to achieve, and I do want to thank them. I also must thank all the ACCHOs and stakeholders who are working with us on eye health.

The Australian Government's support for Strong Eyes, Strong Communities and then their commitment to "End of avoidable blindness by 2025" is pleasing but to date the funding and support for this has not been released. We have some real challenges ahead in activating support for this work.

Another National Eye Health Survey is critical to measure the current state of eye care needs. We are hopeful that this much delayed activity will be completed by 2023, rather than 2020 as initially planned.

I am delighted each year to see the AIHW report provide greater insight to eye service provision.

Trachoma activities still remain complicated. The jurisdictional contracts and plans need to be signed off and data sharing approaches agreed so that this work can be completed in the next two years.

The 2021 Annual Update shows some of the real progress that is being made by ACCHOs and service providers around the whole country to improve eye care delivery and outcomes. When one reflects on the decade of work on the Roadmap plan one sees about how far we have come as a work group and as a sector. The evaluation of the Roadmap and the work of IEH reflects this success, but also highlights the need to build stronger Indigenous leadership and ownership. In 2022, we will explore how we can play the most effective role in promoting Aboriginal eye health in Aboriginal hands.



### 2022 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health Conference

24 - 26 May 2022 | Darwin, NT

### 2022 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health Conference

[Registrations](#) are now open for the 2022 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health Conference, which will take place on Larrakia country in Darwin on Tuesday 24 to Thursday 26 May 2022.

The 2022 Conference is the sixth annual national sector gathering, and is planned as an in-person, COVID-safe event. The conference is co-hosted by Indigenous Eye Health (IEH) and the [Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory](#) (AMSANT) and overseen by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group, chaired by Shaun Tatipata. A Program Advisory Group is supporting program development, with representatives from AMSANT, [Optometry Australia](#), [Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists](#), [Vision 2020 Australia](#), [The Fred Hollows Foundation](#) and [The Brien Holden Foundation](#).

The conference aims to advance the collective work of the sector towards the shared goal of improving eye health access and outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Delegates will include representatives from Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations and other primary care service providers, eye care clinicians, policy makers, researchers, non-government organisations, hospitals, professional peak bodies and government departments from across the country.

**EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION NOW OPEN** 1 December 2021 | 31 January 2022

Early bird registration is now open | [REGISTER HERE](#) | To receive conference updates and other IEH news, join our [mailing list](#)

### In Memoriam Jilpia Jones AM

It is with much sadness we acknowledge the recent passing of Jilpia Nappaljara Jones. Jilpia was born in the Kimberley region of WA but at the age of 3 as a member of the Stolen Generation she was taken to Cairns and adopted. She trained in nursing and then midwifery. In 1971 Jilpia was one of the nurses at Redfern, the very first Aboriginal Medical Service. From 1976 to 1978 she worked as a nurse with the National Trachoma and Eye Health Programme led by Fred Hollows. This was when I first met her. It was during this time while working in the Kimberleys that she met her mother whom she had been told was dead. After this work she studied eye nursing in London on a Churchill Fellowship.

Having worked in Cairns for many years, she and her husband, John Thompson moved to Canberra. Jilpia received a BA from ANU, then worked at AIATSIS. Here she helped write a report for IEH on the history of policy change in eye health. We were delighted to have her on the IEH Advisory Board for many years. She also served on a number of boards including NHMRC. She was awarded an AM for her many contributions. She and Thommo would often return to the Kimberleys to be on Country and see family and friends. She was a wonderful woman, often called "the Princess" by her friends. She was the first Aboriginal entrant in the Miss Australia contest. She was a beautiful woman both inside and out.

- Hugh Taylor

Above: Jilpia attending the launch of the National Indigenous Eye Health Survey with Prof Hugh Taylor and The Honourable Dame Quentin Bryce AD CVO

Below: Jilpia speaking at the launch of Projected Needs for Eye Care Services for Indigenous Australians report



## Evaluation Project Update

The project to evaluate regional implementation of the Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision has largely been completed. A fourth and final codesign workshop was held on 28 and 29 September involving 28 people from 13 organisations and representing all states and territories. The second day workshop was for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of the codesign group only. The workshops were facilitated by Kate Kelleher and considered the three evaluation reports and how best to respond to the findings of the evaluation. Time was also spent considering the approaches for knowledge transfer.

The report from ARTD Consultants presents findings about the effectiveness of regional implementation with information gathered through a national survey and eight case studies. The Clear Horizon report looks at the role of IEH as an intermediary organisation supporting improvements in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye health through key informant interviews and a scoping review has been written internally by IEH considering all publicly available literature on the regional approach to implementing the Roadmap.



The evaluation reports and a summary report for the evaluation are now available on the [IEH website](#)

IEH would like to thank all involved in the evaluation project which has been now over two years of work – and navigated through the COVID-19 pandemic. 53 people participated in the codesign workshops, 54 people contributed to the case studies, 98 people completed the national survey and 28 people were interviewed as key informants. The Paul Ramsay Foundation provided funds to enable the evaluation and the Evaluation Project Advisory Committee helped steer governance, set up and oversight. ARTD Consultants and Clear Horizons provided exceptional service through their independent and expert consultancies. Kate Kelleher was an important grounding force for the work through her workshop facilitation and wise counsel and the members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group for the project have ensured the success and validity of the project and provided IEH with a template for how to work in the future.

Further information about the project, IEH plans and responses to the outcomes and additional exchange of the knowledge gained will follow over the coming months and will be available on the [IEH website](#).

On 24 November IEH held a public webinar to present the evaluation findings and this [webinar is available on the IEH website](#). Presenters include facilitator Kate Kelleher, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group co-chairs Anne-Marie Banfield and Shaun Tatipata, Professor Hugh Taylor and Associate Professor Mitchell Anjou. Dr Tessa Saunders who led the evaluation project work provides a wonderful high level summary of the evaluation findings.



The [webinar recordings](#) are worth watching

## 2021 Annual Update launched

The tenth [Annual Update on the Implementation of The Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision](#) was launched in November. The 2021 update shows continued good progress over the past year in the implementation of the Roadmap recommendations and eye care service provision. The update shows that 27 of 42 (64%) of recommendations and 121 of 138 (88%) of projected activities are now complete.

A highlight in the report is that regional stakeholder collaborations have been initiated in all 64 observed regions across Australia but points to the critical importance of Indigenous leadership within regional and jurisdictional eye care collaborations.

The report also shows clear service shortfalls that represent ongoing challenges. While the rate of eye examinations and cataract surgeries continue to grow, access rates and eye health outcomes are still inequitable with other Australians and below estimated population needs. Diabetic retinopathy screening and treatment access also present an ongoing challenge.

The 2021 Report was launched via an online webinar, with an occasional address by Pat Anderson AO and presentation by Professor Hugh Taylor AC. The event also included a compilation of video messages from First Nations Australians working in and with the eye care sector, which can be accessed [here](#)

Pat Anderson AO and Professor Hugh Taylor AC launching the 2021 Annual Update at an online event



## Roadmap Regional Progress

IEH is very pleased to report that of the 64 identified Indigenous eye health regions across the country, all of them have some form of collaboration occurring between key stakeholders consistent with the principles of regional implementation of the Roadmap. This is a fantastic result, shading all of Australia 'green', and highlighting the commitment to working together to improve eye health and eye health equity across the country!

In 2022, IEH will be continuing to monitor regional progress and prioritise our support to those regions requesting assistance and looking to improve stakeholder collaboration, Indigenous leadership and access to services. We will also be working with state committees and coordinators in adopting a sustainable approach for ongoing support of regions.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group (ATSIRG) now the National Experts Group on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health (NEGATSIEH)

A key finding from the recent evaluation of regional implementation of the Roadmap was that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and ownership of eye health is critical to close the gap for vision. The ATSIRG established to guide the evaluation reinforced the advantages and the richness that this leadership brings to the final results of your project particularly when embraced and seen as more than simply consulting with 'Mob'.

The benefits identified throughout the course of the evaluation have led to the group deciding to form a standalone eye health experts group to offer support and guidance to other important initiatives being undertaken to advance eye health outcomes for First Nations communities. The National Experts Group on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health, or NEGATSIEH for short, will continue in the place of the ATSIRG and will take on a leadership role for the 2022 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health Conference as its next project. NEGATSIEH will continue to seek opportunities to contribute more broadly and those interested in engaging the expertise of this group are encouraged to contact [Shaun Tatipata](#) for more information.

## Six month summary from the Trachoma Engagement Team

In the last six months Lesley, Walter and Milpa have been very busy running health promotion, community engagement and educational screening and treatment sessions with the NT Trachoma Team and other partners in various communities.

### Health Promotion

Milpa has had the opportunity to meet and greet a lot of community people and it's been great to see children looking strong and deady at the various health promotions events.

Events included; Warlpiri Town Camp Health Day, Darwin Deadly Cup Carnival, NATSI Children's Day including Milpa's 10th birthday celebrations, Acacia Hill Health Expo with Captain Starlight, Anthepe Town Camp Health Day with Cuz Congress and the Families as First Teacher Expo in Darwin.



Milpa with Cuz Congress at Anthepe Town Camp Health Day

### Community Engagement and Education

Meetings were held in some communities with stakeholders to promote Milpa's Six Steps to Stop Germs messages and resources to keep encouraging adults to help kids with hygiene to keep strong and healthy.

Lesley and Walter ran engagement and education sessions with Anyinginyi Health Promotion Team, Braitling Pre-school, Yarralin, Congress Child Development Centre – North Side.

In Amoonguna they held a BBQ and community clean up and Lesley introduced a home-made cleaning products and tips session with eight women as part of the Tangentyere community development program (CPD) to great success.



Kirstie Bloomfield coordinator of the Amoonguna CDP with Lesley and the Ladies



Milpa visiting Yarralin school

### CDC – NT Trachoma Community Screening and Treatment

IEH travelled to Yuendumu, Docker River, Haasts Bluff, Nyirripi, Mutitjulu, Titjikala and Finke with the NT trachoma team and ran community sessions while the nurses were screening.

### GOOD 360: matching goods with needs

IEH is delighted that [GOOD360](#) is now assisting trachoma elimination programs, thanks to Rotary for the introduction. The not-for-profit organisation links companies with surplus or wishing to donate goods, to organisations working with vulnerable communities.

Donations from Koh and The Body Shop are being used in community education sessions.

This week three pallets (over 9,000 products) of Dettol hand sanitiser arrived in Alice Springs and Katherine to support Nganampa Health Council, Katherine West Health Board, and other Aboriginal Controlled Health/Services with Covid community education and vaccination programs. Thanks to Koh, The Body Shop and Dettol.



Dettol hand sanitiser on its way to Alice Springs and Katherine

We are VERY grateful our WA colleagues from [Environmental Health Trachoma Project](#) are safe after an emergency landing at Cunerderin airstrip due to [losing an engine mid-air](#).

Last we heard, all were safe and well at the Ettamogah Pub for the night.



### Milpa's Poster Competition

Students in primary schools, early learning centres and Families as First Teachers in the Northern Territory were asked to create an artwork based on 'Milpa's Six Steps to Stop Germs'

Fantastic interpretations included drawings, paintings, colouring-in and photography. With simple individual illustrations to huge colourful class efforts and even crazy psychedelics!

Indigenous Eye Health is absolutely thrilled to announce the [winning entries](#)

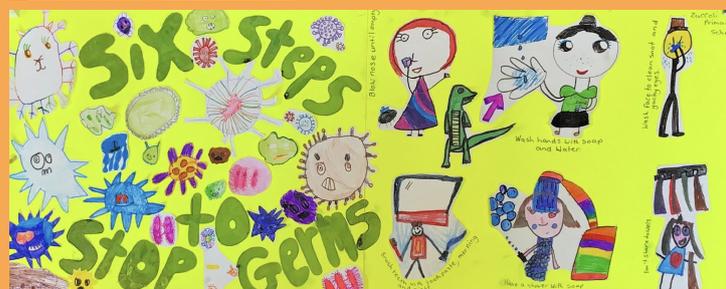
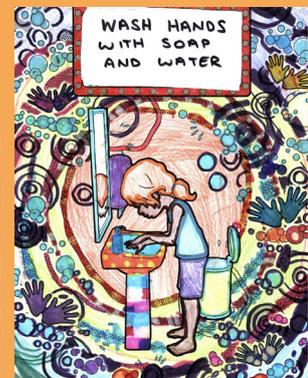
The winning artists won \$1,000 and runners up \$500 worth of art supplies for schools. Congratulations to all!

Thank you to NT Department of Education and CDC for supporting the event as part of their efforts to assist the sustainable elimination of trachoma and reducing other infections.



Special thank you to judges Makkailah Ridgeway, Charlee-Ann Ah Chee and Tamie Devine

See some of the winning entries, clockwise from top: Borroloola FaFT, Clyde Fenton PS, Zuccoli PS, Akekareng PS





# Diabetes Eye Care

## NAIDOC Week 'Deadly Cup' Rugby League Carnival

In July 2021, IEH supported and participated in a range of health promotion activities at the ['Deadly Cup' Rugby League Carnival](#), one of the largest NAIDOC week celebrations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Northern Territory. The NRL NT referees were central to these activities and donned the shirts from IEH's diabetes eye care campaign, ['Check Today, See Tomorrow'](#) to generate awareness and encourage yearly eye checks for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living with diabetes.



Read the full article on IEH website [here](#)

Photo by Mills photography

## World Sight Day 2021 with The Fred Hollows Foundation

IEH partnered with the [Indigenous Australia Program](#) at The Fred Hollows Program again this World Sight Day 2021 to tailor the [IAPB World Sight Day](#) messaging for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The co-branded tiles and accompanying information was shared through social media and through our networks on World Sight Day.



## NSW Rural Doctors Network Indigenous Eye Health Webinar Series

In September 2021, [NSW Rural Doctors Network](#) (RDN) invited IEH to take part in a two-part Indigenous eye health [webinar series](#) to share an overview of the sectors work in improving access and outcomes to eye care services and provide an insight into ['Check Today, See Tomorrow'](#), an example of culturally appropriate eye health promotion for Aboriginal and Torres Strait people.

Aboriginal Health Promotion Officer Vanessa Murdoch, a proud and strong Kullilli and Wakka Wakka woman from Queensland, working on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung country in Victoria co presented one of the webinars with IEH. Vanessa who represents [EACH](#) on the Eastern Metropolitan Melbourne Aboriginal Eye Health Regional Stakeholder Group shared how she is actively involved in promoting the importance of eye health and supporting access to eyecare services through the [Bunjils Mirring Nganga-djak project](#).

## Further health promotion resource development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye care

In 2022, IEH will undertake further work to develop culturally appropriate health promotion resources to encourage regular eye checks and promote awareness of refractive error and cataract, that are still significantly contributing to vision loss and blindness among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The new health promotion resources will support 'Roadmap' health system regional reform activities across Australia to help close the gap for vision.

Please email [Carol Wynne](#) for further information

## We are still looking for a researcher

IEH has a position available for an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander researcher. The broad goal of this appointment, which has two years of funding available at this time, is to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led research in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye health. The position is listed on the [University of Melbourne website](#) and people interested in the position or want more information can talk to Mitchell Anjou through [manjou@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:manjou@unimelb.edu.au) or call 0433 673 452

## A Collaboration with Weenthunga Health Network's Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie Program

In July 2021, IEH collaborated with the [Weenthunga Health Network](#) to organise a webinar titled 'Insights into Public Health and Eye Health' for First Nations women connected to their Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie program who were interested in health careers.

A number of guest speakers joined the webinar to share stories and insights into their career journeys including ophthalmologist Kristopher Rallah Baker (connecting from Gubbi Gubbi country), optometrist Shannon Davis (connecting from Juru country) and some of IEH's First Nation's staff (connecting from Wurundjeri, Larrakia, Arrernte, Wurundjeri and Boandik country).

In 2022, IEH will continue its collaboration and connections with Weenthunga's Nyarrn-gakgo mangkie program and provide a placement experience for the First Nations women who are journeying towards a health career.



## Changes in IEH staffing

Dr Kris Rallah-Baker has accepted appointment in IEH as an honorary Principal Fellow at the University of Melbourne with the academic title of Associate Professor. Kris is a proud Yuggera/Warangu/Biri-Gubba/Wiradjuri man who grew up on country in Brisbane.

IEH were also delighted to welcome Makkaillah Ridgeway into the role of Administration Officer in July and Digby Mercer as Aboriginal Health Promotion Officer (part-time) in November 2021.

Makkaillah is a Kamilaroi/Worimi woman from Newcastle, NSW. Her role provides support to the work of the Operations team based in Melbourne.

Digby is a proud Gadigal man of the Eora Nation, currently living in Melbourne. His role will contribute to the development of health promotion resources to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye care.

We welcome Kris, Makkaillah and Digby and thank them for their important and ongoing contributions and input to the work of IEH.

## Changes in IEH Advisory Board

The IEH Advisory Board was established in 2008 to provide governance support and oversight of IEH activities. IEH has been privileged to enjoy the counsel of many wise and wonderful Board members throughout the years. We are pleased to welcome Professor Cath Chamberlain to the IEH Advisory Board following her recent appointment as Professor of Indigenous Health at the University of Melbourne. Other current Board members include Trevor Buzzacott, Karen Hale-Robertson, Shannon Drake, John Funder, James van Smeerdijk, Trish Crossin and Marianne Wood.

## Thank you

IEH would like to thank our funders and donors who all contribute to making our work possible. We would also like to thank the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, our partners, stakeholders and Advisory Board for contributing to and supporting this important work.