

“If it is not counted, it’s not done”

National oversight needs to be established by the Commonwealth government to ensure eye services to Indigenous Australians are effective in improving eye health outcomes.

The Commonwealth government approved *The National Framework for Action to Promote Eye Health and Prevent Avoidable Blindness and Vision Loss* (the National Framework) in 2005. Subsequently the National Framework Implementation Plan was approved in 2014, and we understand will be overseen by the Community Care and Population Health Principal Committee (CCPHPC) that reports to AHMAC.

We understand that the NAGATSIHID and NATSIHSC subcommittees of AHMAC recently advised they may not be the best mechanisms to undertake an oversight role. It is important to recognise that the oversight required has two discrete components: one is the monitoring and evaluation of health service performance data, the other is more normative relating to setting guidelines and standards.

The need for provision of broad oversight and accountability of Indigenous eye health under AHMAC is consistent with the National Framework approach. This would oversee the implementation of national and jurisdictional strategies as part of the Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision, and have a monitoring and evaluation function to support Indigenous eye health.

How to progress the process of oversight:

The following actions need to occur to implement an oversight function:

- It is highly desirable to utilise existing mechanisms to avoid duplication and ‘siloeing’ the oversight role.
- A governance body with accountability to AHMAC should take on this function
 - Such a body would reflect existing jurisdictional engagement and have experience and expertise in Indigenous health
 - AHMAC itself should determine which committee/s should take on the oversight role with regular reporting to AHMAC
 - The body should draw on stakeholder expertise as required
- An oversight mechanism should be consistent with the approach of the CCPHPC laid out in the National Framework for Action to Promote Eye Health and Prevent Avoidable Blindness and Vision Loss.
- The governance body should monitor performance and evaluate program implementation and effectiveness
 - The new National Eye Health Survey will provide current prevalence data and update the 2008 baseline figures to allow monitoring of eye health outcomes.
 - An additional oversight function for the Commonwealth is to establish national policies, guidelines and benchmarks. This may be undertaken by a different body or mechanism.