

## **Regional Implementation of the Victorian Aboriginal Eye Health Strategy Information Sheet 'The Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision'**

### **VACKH Eye Health Subcommittee**

In November 2009, the Victorian Government committed \$1 million over 4 years to improving eye health outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians. The Victorian Advisory Council on Koori Health (VACKH) Eye Health Subcommittee was established in 2010 to oversee the implementation of projects under this commitment. The Subcommittee's terms of reference are to:

1. Oversee the development and implementation of strategies that address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye health issues, consistent with the Victorian government and COAG Close the Health Gap agenda
2. Provide expert, technical and policy advice and recommendations to the VACKH specific to eye health initiatives
3. Work with the department or funded groups to ensure that a rigorous evaluation framework is developed to ensure sustainability of strategies.

The Subcommittee comprises representatives from key organizations working in eye health and Aboriginal health in Victoria. This includes the State and Commonwealth governments, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO), Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS), Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital (RVEEH), Australian College of Optometry (ACO), The University of Melbourne, Vision Initiative, Vision Australia and Vision 2020 Australia.

The Subcommittee endorsed three projects including the employment of a Statewide Eye Health Project Officer at VACCHO and a Patient Pathways Coordinator at RVEEH. The ACO was funded to administer a subsidized spectacle scheme for Aboriginal Victorians.

### **The Roadmap**

In 2011, the Indigenous Eye Health Unit (IEHU) in The University of Melbourne, developed and published The Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision (Roadmap), which specifies 42 interlocked recommendations to improve Indigenous Australians eye care. The recommendations were based on extensive consultations and research conducted throughout Australia in 2008-2011. The Roadmap has been endorsed federally by National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health organization (NACCHO), Optometrists Association Australia (OAA), Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (RANZCO) and Vision 2020 Australia.

The Roadmap was developed in response to the National Indigenous Eye Health Survey, conducted in 2008, which found that:

- blindness rates in Indigenous adults are 6.2 times the rate of mainstream
- low vision rates in Indigenous adults are 2.8 times the rate of mainstream
- the major preventable or treatable causes of blindness in Indigenous adults are cataract (32%), refractive error (14%), diabetic eye disease (9%) and trachoma (9%, but none in Victoria).

- Overall, 94% of this vision loss is preventable or treatable, but 35% of adults have never had an eye exam.

Further information about the Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision is published on the Indigenous Eye Health Unit website [http://iehu.unimelb.edu.au/reports/iehu\\_reports](http://iehu.unimelb.edu.au/reports/iehu_reports).

### **Victorian Aboriginal Eye Health Strategy**

In July 2012, the Victorian Aboriginal Eye Health Strategy was developed by the VACKH Aboriginal Eye Health Subcommittee to address the broad, overarching objective to eradicate preventable blindness for Aboriginal Victorians.

The key steps for regional implementation have been endorsed by the Honourable David Davis MP, Victorian Minister for Health. They include: defining population-based needs for eye care; identifying regional hub hospitals; developing regional service directories; identifying service gaps; establishing regional collaboration network; developing referral protocols; improving coordination and case management; data collection and monitoring; and accountability and oversight.

The Subcommittee has established a working group to lead activities around the regional implementation of the Roadmap. The group is working to develop a shortlist of Department of Health regions in Victoria and identification of key stakeholder. Stakeholders will likely include primary health care providers, eye care providers, Aboriginal and community health programs, hospital services and Federal and State health authorities.

Further information about The Victorian Aboriginal Eye Health program and VACKH eye health subcommittee documents is published on the following web pages:

<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/aboriginalhealth/programs/eyes.htm>

[http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/B8B7634B005F7159CA25786A0002F390/\\$FILE/Progress%20sheet%20-%20Eye%20health%20Feb%202011.pdf](http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/B8B7634B005F7159CA25786A0002F390/$FILE/Progress%20sheet%20-%20Eye%20health%20Feb%202011.pdf)

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