

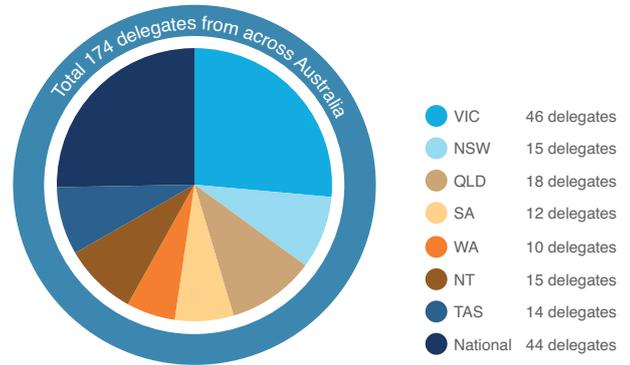
Summary Report

The Close the Gap for Vision by 2020 National Conference 2018 was held in Melbourne on 15 and 16 March 2018 at the Arts Centre Melbourne. This is the second national conference held by Indigenous Eye Health at The University of Melbourne to support efforts to close the gap for vision by 2020.

The 2018 conference theme ‘*striving together*’ provided a framework which enabled delegates to come together to showcase, celebrate and share successes and achievements and also to work together to identify the challenges and solutions in order to close the gap for vision by 2020.

More than 170 delegates, including 43 speakers, attended the conference from all state and territories with representation from community, local and regional services, state organisations, national peak agencies and government.

Conference attendance was significantly boosted from 2017 and reflects the growing interest in ‘*striving together*’ and the many regions across Australia that are engaged (now over 40 regions, covering over 60% of the Indigenous population) in activities to close the gap for vision by 2020.



“It is inspiring to see a wide range of organisations working towards this important common goal guided by The Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision. This conference shows the progress that can be achieved when you work together”
- Hon Greg Hunt MP, Minister for Health

16 of the 42 recommendations within the Roadmap are fully implemented and there is increasing activity on the remaining 26. The National Eye Health Survey 2016 shows the gap for blindness between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians halved from six times in 2008 to three times and trachoma rates in endemic areas fell from over 20% (2008) to less than 5% in 2016.

“This purposeful collaboration of health service providers and integration of all the steps on the patient’s pathway has worked to reduce blindness among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples” - Professor Marcia Langton, University of Melbourne.

Across the country, local, regional and jurisdictional efforts provide examples of people and organisations working together to close the gap for vision. Initiatives and successes from many organisations were shared. Long standing collectives were continuing to develop their systems of operation and newer groups were finding success advancing locally determined priorities. Health promotion, delivery innovations and whole-of-system initiatives were improving outcomes. The approaches, successes and resources are largely adaptable and available for others to use.

Powerful Aboriginal leadership and community involvement was evident at the conference through key note presentations and participation in conference activities. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community leadership, involvement and determination in eye care were considered critical as we progress efforts to 2020.





Close the Gap for Vision by 2020 Striving Together

National Conference 2018

“We can close the gap for vision by 2020 with Aboriginal led responses, if approaches are embedded properly in the Aboriginal Community Controlled sector and the solutions adopted are sustainable” - Dr Dawn Casey, NACCHO

Timely access to consistent and reliable data was identified as a key challenge for efforts to close the gap for vision. Presentations illustrated importance of national, jurisdictional, regional and local data and for these systems to be consistent and integrated. Close the gap for vision initiatives are based in primary care and the importance of developing solutions through the Aboriginal community-controlled health sector was highlighted. Important themes also included finding efficiencies, adequate resourcing and building towards sustainable system reforms.

Delegates provided input to a number of other issues that remains as challenges for the sector to solve, including cultural safety in eye care and in all health care, sustaining regional achievements, improvement of subsidised spectacle schemes and treatment options for diabetic retinopathy.

The meeting provided further evidence of the importance and criticality of collaboration and working together - efforts and achievements are empowered and enhanced when the collective pursues a commonly agreed goal.

The inaugural Leaky Pipe Awards 2018 were announced at the conference dinner. The awards recognise achievements and contributions to progress activities to close the gap for vision and were presented to Faye Clarke from Victoria for Community Leadership, Angus Turner from Western Australia for Service Delivery, the Great South Coast Eye Health Project, Victoria for Regional Engagement and Colina Waddell in NSW as the Unsung Hero.

The evaluation feedback regarding the conference was overwhelmingly positive, with delegates reporting they had opportunity to learn, appreciated the diversity of speakers, especially the strong Aboriginal voices, and made some very useful connections. Delegates confirmed that opportunities like the conference were very important and valuable in order to maintain the momentum, support and focus towards 2020 and to close the gap for vision.

“This is very encouraging improvement, but more needs to be done. With ongoing work from all stakeholders, we are determined to close the gap for Indigenous vision by 2020” - Professor Hugh Taylor, Indigenous Eye Health

The 2019 Close the Gap for Vision by 2020 National Conference is planned for March 2019.



This report, the full conference report, photo gallery and supplementary materials can be accessed at IEH website www.iehu.unimelb.edu.au

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