

Welcome to the December 2019 edition of the [Indigenous Eye Health](#) (IEH) Newsletter.

2019 Annual Update on the Implementation of the Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision

Indigenous Eye Health (IEH) launched the 2019 Annual Update on the Implementation of The Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision on Monday 11 November 2019 at the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (RANZCO) Scientific Congress in Sydney, NSW.

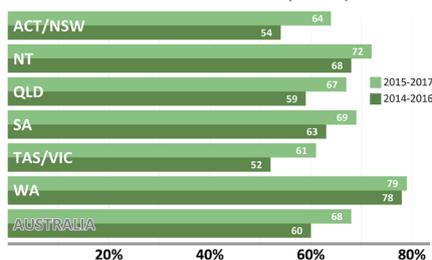


Professor Hugh Taylor, Dr Heather Mack and Dr Kris Rallah-Baker at the launch

Dr Heather Mack, President of RANZCO and Dr Kris Rallah-Baker, President of AIDA and Australia's first Indigenous Ophthalmologist joined Professor Hugh Taylor to launch the 2019 update, which shows

- 50 per cent of systemic issues identified in Indigenous eyecare have been fixed. Progress is being made on all of the intermediary steps, with almost 80 percent complete
- Outreach eye examinations received by Indigenous Australians have almost tripled in the last six years
- Cataract surgery rates have increased nearly 2.5 times since 2008, however a further 2,400 cataract surgeries are required each year to meet the population need
- Indigenous patients still wait 50 per cent longer for cataract surgery in public hospitals, promoting calls for more timely access, resources and case management
- The number of Indigenous Australians with diabetes receiving annual eye checks for diabetic retinopathy – which causes vision loss and blindness – has more than doubled over the last 10 years. With 155 retinal cameras being provided to Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHO), these rates will continue to improve
- Subsidised schemes are being reviewed and strengthened to improve access to prescription glasses.

Cataract Surgery: Indigenous % of Need Met 2014-2016 and 2015-2017 [AIHW 2019]



Real progress is being made by all organisations working to improve Indigenous eye health outcomes across Australia but the efforts must be sustained to close the gap for vision by 2020. Read the 2019 annual update [here](#).

To coincide with the annual update launch, Professor Hugh Taylor wrote an article for Melbourne University publication *Pursuit* about the work to Close the Gap for Vision, focusing on cataract surgery for Indigenous Australians titled [‘Can we Close the Gap on Blindness by 2020?’](#)

‘Share Your Story’ initiative launched

Indigenous Eye Health has recently launched ‘Share Your Story’ – a selection of stories of successful activities and significant achievements in Indigenous eye health by individuals, organisations, regional eye stakeholder groups, and through other collaborations relating to efforts to close the gap for vision. Stories released so far include:

- [Culturally Safe Eye Care at Karadi](#)
- [Eye Health the Focus at State Carnival](#)
- [Integrating Retinal Camera Screening at Gidgee Healing Normanton](#)
- [The Strength of Partnership for Outreach Optometry in Central Australia](#)

Read more about the ‘Share Your Story’ initiative and how to get involved [here](#).



‘Asking the Question’ resource launched

IEH has developed a ‘toblerone’ desktop resource that acts as a prompt to ensure the question ‘Are you Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin’ is asked. IEH encourages local community adaptations of the ‘toblerone’ desktop resource and development of other resources to prompt and support ‘asking the question’. Read more about and order the resource [here](#). The artwork for the resource has been used with the permission of North East Health Communities and Victorian Aboriginal Health Service.



The new ‘Asking the Question’ desktop resource acts as a prompt for staff to ask patients ‘Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?’



Close the Gap for Vision by 2020

NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2020

The Gap and Beyond

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN

[Register here](#)

Abstract Submissions ‘Share your story’

Abstracts are welcome on any topic relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye health

Close the Gap for Vision by 2020: *The Gap and Beyond* - National Conference 2020

Indigenous Eye Health (IEH) at the University of Melbourne and co-host Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia (AHCSA) are pleased to announce that registrations and abstract submissions are now open for the Close the Gap for Vision by 2020: The Gap and Beyond- National Conference 2020, to be held at the Adelaide Convention Centre on Wednesday 18 and Thursday 19 March 2020 in Adelaide, South Australia. This conference is also supported by our partners Optometry Australia, RANZCO & Vision 2020 Australia.

The 2020 conference will provide opportunity to highlight the shared progress and advances being made in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye health. It will explore successes and achievements being made to close the gap for vision by 2020 and the opportunities to sustain and continue this progress towards the elimination of avoidable blindness and vision loss by 2025. The conference will include plenary speakers, panel discussions and presentations as well as workshops and cultural experiences. Read more on the conference website [here](#).

We encourage all folk working in Indigenous eye care to attend the conference and consider submitting an abstract for presentation. The conference is a great opportunity to get together with colleagues from across Australia and learn about the steps being taken to close the gap for vision and excitingly consider what is beyond the gap...



Regional Implementation

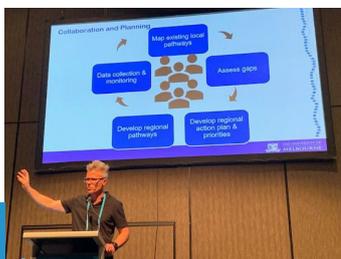
Roadmap progress

IEH regional implementation activity includes 55 of 63 regions across Australia. IEH is active (directly involved) in over 30 of these regions and while IEH staff time can be devoted to supporting and advising regional groups, many regions operate independently and appear self-sufficient. A continuing focus for 2020 regional implementation is to support stakeholder groups in WA and SA. IEH also observes activity through six (QLD, VIC, NSW/ACT, TAS, NT, WA) jurisdictional Indigenous eye care groups. The WA committee has recently been re-activated through Rural Health West. This means that 7/8 jurisdictions have oversight of Indigenous eye health and work continues to encourage SA stakeholders to establish a group.

Spreading the word

It has been a busy time for IEH with conference presentations over the past few months. The papers and displays presented at the conferences listed below indicate a diverse spread of audiences where we are seeking to enlist the broader health sector to support and contribute to 'close the gap for vision'.

- Optometry Tasmania TLC (Hobart, August)
- Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) (Adelaide, September)
- CRANaplus (remote nurses) (Hunter Valley, September)
- Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA) (Darwin, September)
- Ngar-Wu Wanyarra Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander Health Conference (Shepparton, October)
- Rural Medicine Australia (RMA, ACRRM) (Gold Coast, October)
- GP19 (RACGP) (Adelaide, October)
- NACCHO Annual General Meeting (Darwin, November)
- RANZCO Scientific Congress (Sydney, November)
- NSW RDN Rural GPs Conference (Sydney, November)



Nick Schubert presenting at the Rural Medicine Australia Conference

Evaluating regional implementation of the Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision

On Tuesday 29 October 2019, the first (of three) codesign workshops for the evaluation of the regional implementation of The Roadmap was held at The University of Melbourne. The workshop was organised by IEH and facilitated by an external Aboriginal facilitator, Kate Kelleher, with the support of evaluators from ARTD Consultants.

The objectives of the workshop were to ensure participants understood their role in co-designing the evaluation and how they can be involved in the evaluation and to reach broad agreement on:

- what 'success' of regional implementation looks like from various perspectives across the eye care pathway
- what important elements/issues can be identified to support the development of questions and methods for the evaluation
- the process/principles for identifying case study sites and the best way to share the evaluation findings with those who will benefit from and use the findings

The workshop was well attended, with 38 people from across the country and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye care pathway participating in great discussion throughout the day.

The input provided by workshop participants is now being used to finalise the evaluation questions and methodology. The codesign participants will continue to provide input over the course of the evaluation, with the next workshop to focus on initial data once that has been collected.

Further detail about the evaluation will be shared once relevant ethics processes are completed. A key outcome from the workshop was the request to establish an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reference group to support the evaluation. The first meeting of the reference group will be held in December.

Read more about the evaluation [here](#).



Participants of the Roadmap Evaluation Co-Design Working Group at the first co-design workshop in Melbourne on 29 October

5th Annual Ngar-Wu Wanyarra Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Conference

It was great to catch-up with others working in the Indigenous eye health sector at the 5th Annual Ngar-Wu Wanyarra Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Conference in Shepparton on 16 October. Joshua Tuiono and Jacque Nethercoate from the East Gippsland Aboriginal Eye Health Partnership presented on their achievements to close the gap for vision.



Eye health stakeholders catch-up at Ngar-Wu Wanyarra Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Conference in Shepparton on 16 October



2019 Milpa Dance Tour

Over two weeks from the 14 – 25 October 2019, IEH & Indigenous Hip Hop Projects (IHHP) travelled to Alekerange, Ampilatwatja, Canteen Creek, Willowra and Ti-Tree community schools as part of the '2019 Milpa Dance Tour'. Students and teachers took part in dance workshops with IHHP, hygiene routine activities with staff from IEH and CDC, trachoma information sessions, and performed their dances with other students, teachers, family and community members at a community BBQ at the end of each day.



It was great to see lots of smiling faces from parents and grandparents that came along to watch their children dance. This was followed by the presentation of certificates and Milpa Show Bags to students and the Mums and Bubs from the FaFT program for their participation. The Show Bag was filled with lots of fun goodies to help follow Milpa's Six Steps to Stop Germs. We want to say a big thank you to the schools and communities of Alekerange, Ampilatwatja, Canteen Creek, Willowra and Ti-Tree for having us visit on the '2019 Milpa Dance Tour'. Also thank you to NT DOH, IHHP and everyone else who made the tour a possibility – especially those who helped cooked the BBQs in the hot weather!



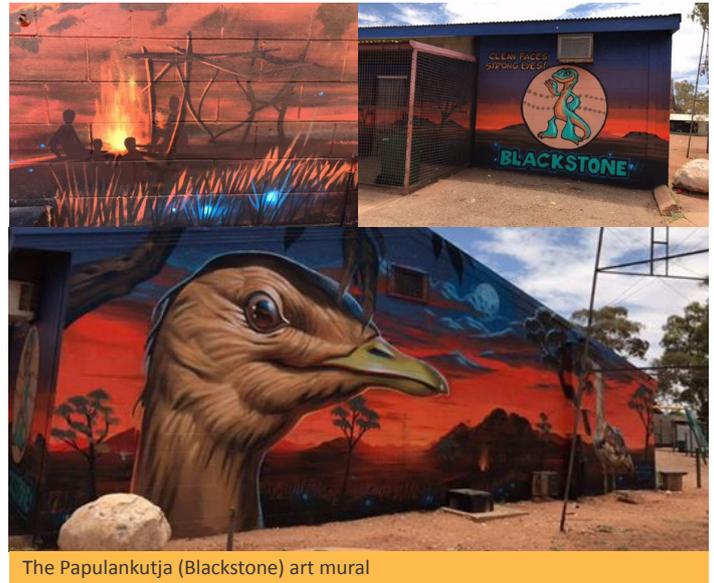
'2019 Milpa dance tour' with IHHP visiting Ti Tree (top) and Willowra (below) community schools

NT Environmental Health Working Group update

The NT Environmental Health Working Group was established in 2018 in recognition of the importance of intersectoral partnerships in the elimination of hygiene-related infectious diseases such as trachoma. The group meets bi-monthly and has up to 16 organisations represented. Since its establishment, the group has been facilitated by IEH staff member Yash Srivastava in his position as Trachoma Environmental Improvement Manager. Unfortunately, this position within IEH which was externally funded is not continuing. The group has identified the need to continue the work, acknowledging the importance of building and maintaining trust and confidence between organisations, establishing strong Aboriginal voices in the group and developing a stronger system of accountability that will enable meaningful collaborative action for improved health outcomes. IEH is working on options with partners to ensure the group continues.

Papulankutja (Blackstone) community art mural

IEH have been working with the Papulankutja (Blackstone) community and stakeholders on the creation of an art mural featuring local artwork and stories, Milpa the Trachoma Goanna and the 'Clean Faces, Strong Eyes' message. IEH, Indigenous Hip Hop Projects and Local Arts Centre in Papulankutja are working closely with young people in the school to design new football and softball t-shirts based on artwork depicted in the mural. An official launch has been planned, with a series of fun activities including hip hop workshops and performances by IHHP. Thank you to the Papulankutja (Blackstone) community for having us, we can't wait for the launch!



The Papulankutja (Blackstone) art mural

Trachoma information session at Lukura Women's Centre in Ntaria

IEH staff members Angela & Lesley headed out to Lukura Women's Centre in Ntaria on 25 November 2019 to facilitate a trachoma information session with women and children from the community. As part of the session, staff set-up a hygiene station to promote clean hands and faces and also ran a craft activity where people could make their own germs (see photo), which provided an opportunity to talk about germs, how they're transmitted and the effects they have on our health. Community members were given a trachoma gift bag with a Milpa t-shirt, wristband, stickers and tattoos. Thank you to Lukura Women's Centre and the Ntaria community for having us.



Making germs at the Lukura Women's Centre



Milpa in Doomadgee with staff from Queensland Health and the Starlight Children's Foundation

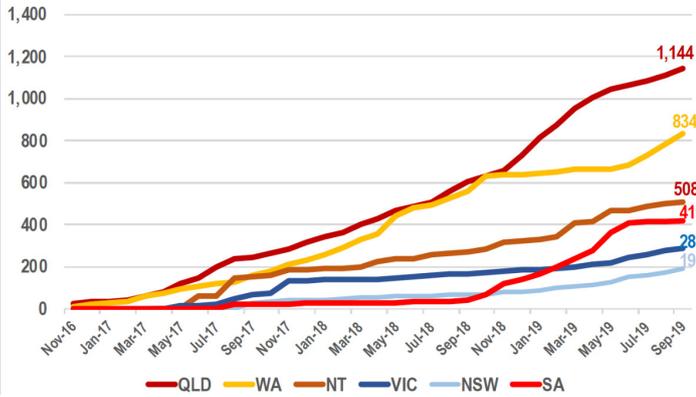


Diabetes Eye Care

MBS item 12325

The latest data on usage of the Medicare Item number (MBS 12325) for retinal photography screening shows growth in usage in all states and territories across Australia, especially in Queensland and Western Australia and there are signs of increasing activity in New South Wales. IEH has developed a range of resources to assist in retinal photography screening which can be found on the [IEH website](#).

MBS Item 12325 - Cumulative Total - by State



Current usage of Medicare Item MBS 12325

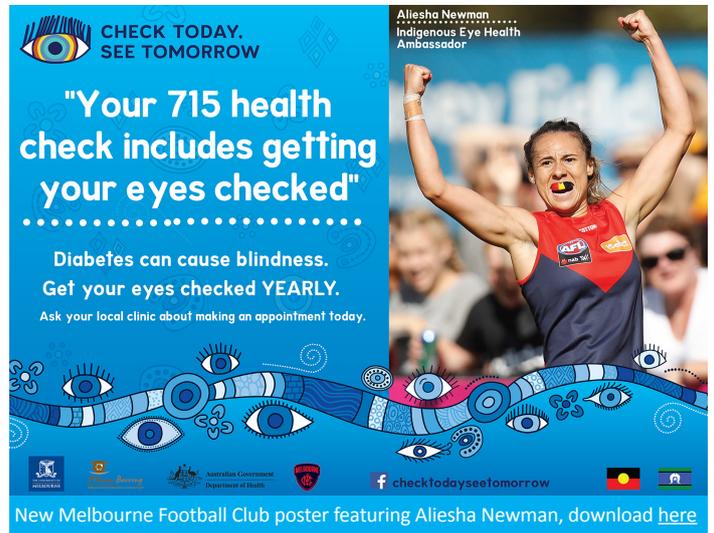
'Check Today, See Tomorrow' resource adaptations

Indigenous Eye Health (IEH) encourage local community adaptations of the 'Check Today, See Tomorrow' messages, images and illustrations to raise awareness of diabetes eye care amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. When developing the 'Check Today, See Tomorrow' poster series, the design was considered to allow local/regional adaptations. Photos of community heroes or champions from regions can be replaced within the poster templates with a personal quote to support the diabetes eye care message. See examples of local adaptations, read more and find out how to get involved on our [website](#).



National Diabetes Week 2019

Thursday 14 November was World Diabetes Day (WDD) 2019. WDD is an annual international day to raise awareness about diabetes and its complications. This WDD was about spreading the message 'Diabetes: Protect your Family'. Vision loss and blindness is one of the major complications of diabetes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, but simple action can reduce the risk. By advising and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with diabetes to get a yearly eye check, you can reduce their risk of vision loss and blindness.



World Sight Day 2019

Thursday 10 October was World Sight Day (WSD) 2019. WSD is an international annual day of awareness on blindness and vision impairment established by the World Health Organisation. The theme for 2019 was 'Vision First' and IEH launched the "Share Your Story" initiative on this day.

Australia's long term national health plan

[Australia's long term national health plan](#) was launched by Health Minister Greg Hunt in August 2019. The plan identifies 'End avoidable blindness in Indigenous communities by 2025' as one of the national objectives.

Triaging retinal images for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with diabetes

IEH presented at the recent RACGP annual conference 'GP19' in Adelaide to encourage GPs to get involved with diabetes retinal screening. The 30-minute presentation aimed to teach GPs how to identify the key retinal signs for diabetic retinopathy in a photograph and differentiate between normal images (requiring routine review) versus abnormal images (requiring referral for comprehensive eye examination). More detailed teaching is available through IEH free and online DR grading course. The challenge and exciting realisation made through this presentation is that triaging images can be communicated and taught relatively quickly, and this is a skill that can be developed in a range of health workers in primary care.

IEH funding

IEH would like to thank Minderoo and MML for their recently advised additional funding. IEH would also like to thank The Paul Ramsay Foundation, BB&A Miller Foundation, the Cybec Foundation and other private donors for their ongoing support of Indigenous Eye Health. IEH also received funding through Australian Government Department of Health and we acknowledge the importance and value of these agreements.

Staffing update

IEH would like to welcome new staff member Colin Moore (Trachoma Community Engagement Officer). Colin is based in Alice Springs. IEH farewells staff members Angela Ross and Yash Srivastava at the end of the year. We would like to thank them both for their valuable contributions and extend our best wishes for the future. We would also like to wish Carol Wynne all the best for her maternity leave.

Thank you

IEH thanks all of our donors, funders and partners and everyone contributing to and supporting the work.



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