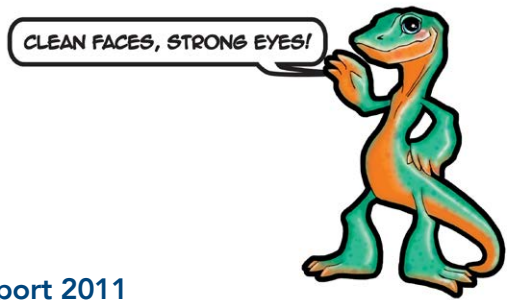


The Indigenous Eye Health Unit Trachoma Elimination Update: July 2013



2013 Budget Announcement

We are delighted that the May 2013 budget included \$16.5m to continue the trachoma elimination work for the next 4 years. This means the great work that has been started will continue.



Centre for Disease Control trachoma volunteers Kelsey Laffy and Verangi Herath at Maningrida March 2012

Trachoma Story Kits and Additional Resources

In April 2013 the Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) endorsed the Trachoma Story Kits as Australia's primary trachoma health promotion resource. There are now almost 1,000 Kits being used across Australia.

The Kits are currently available for the cost of freight but later in 2013 with the support of DoHA, they will be supplied and distributed to clinics, schools and community work places free of charge, including freight.

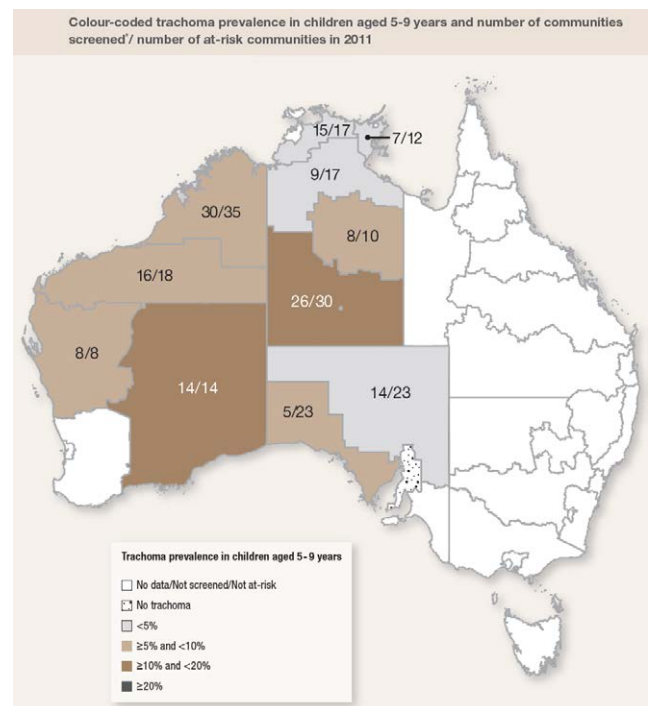


The A2 Flipchart is used by environmental health workers and for older people with low vision.

Trachoma Report 2011

The recently released Australian Trachoma Surveillance Report shows good progress.

National: Screening increased in the NT and SA and decreased in WA compared to 2010. Across NT, SA and WA prevalence in 1-9 year olds was 5%, down from 13% in 2010. At a regional level prevalence ranged from 2% to 28% and within the regions, some community 'hotspots' are higher still. Clean face prevalence in 5-9 year olds was 74% in the NT, 88% in SA and 75% in WA. Trichiasis screening was low with less than 10% coverage of the population at risk. Work is underway to raise awareness of screening for trichiasis and to improve referral pathways. In addition, vision and eye examinations have recently been included in the Adult Health Checks.



National Results 2011. (National Trachoma Surveillance and Reporting Unit)

health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/health-otsih-pubs-trachreport

Northern Territory: Since 2009, the NT conducts antibiotic treatment each six months in communities with greater than 20% prevalence and expanding this approach is showing good results. The unpublished 2012 data from the NT show a prevalence of 4%, which is very encouraging. However, regional prevalence in the NT in 2012 ranged from 1% to 9%, so there is a great deal of work to be done.

Trachoma Health Promotion

The IEHU provides trachoma support and resources to programs across Australia. This includes assisting with local adaptations of resources, technical support in health promotion and social marketing, and co-ordinating Trachoma Elimination Football Clinics. This work has been mainly with the NT, but links with WA, SA and NSW are growing as well.

The IEHU and the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) in the NT Department of Health have been successful in bringing together trachoma and hygiene program partners. In 2013 the CDC aims to streamline the logistically challenging screening and treatment approaches and to unify health promotion and social marketing strategies.

A new group has been formed to co-ordinate health promotion by limiting duplication and adding value to initiatives and resources. As well, there will be co-ordinated activities with environmental health and other hygiene-related health programs.

School based health and hygiene programs can teach and motivate children who then can influence their families and communities. With this in mind, the Trachoma Story Kit resources are linked to Curriculum Frameworks of NT, SA and WA.



Washing facilities in schools need to be safe and functional

The IEHU's recent study found a quarter of school staff were not aware trachoma existed in their community, and many considered dirty faces as the norm, yet they were supportive of hygiene education and activities.

As a result its enormously encouraging that there has been significant progress to support schools at a national and Territory level.

- Health and Physical Education section of the Revised Australian Curriculum now includes face and hand washing.
- The NT Education Department has created direct links and greater access to trachoma resources for school staff through their Learning Links and a digital discussion and learning resource network for teachers.

- Trachoma will be a key message within the health component of the Health and Physical Education website which is going live in a few weeks.
- Face washing will be included in self-care activities when the NT Assessment of Student Competencies for children's development and learning is revised by the end of the year.

It's tremendous that the Central Australia Aboriginal Congress (CAAC) health promotion team has creatively incorporated the trachoma resources, imagery and materials into early childhood education and housing programs around Alice Springs and the NT. These include:

- A 'personal hygiene talking poster'. Health promotion staff consulted with local communities about combining key hygiene messages needed to eliminate trachoma and other infections.



A work in progress - 4 step personal hygiene routine for a talking poster will be in four Central Australia languages

- Negotiating with NT Housing Department to include Milpa "Clean Faces Strong Eyes" stickers on the bathroom mirrors in 250 refurbished homes.
- Working with Families as First Teachers (FaFT) a program supporting families and children from birth to five years of age in 20 remote communities. Trachoma information and facial hygiene messages are incorporated into the new FaFT *Health, Hygiene and Safety Standards Manual*.

The IEHU has created a new Milpa the Trachoma Goanna poster with Trachoma Ambassador Aaron Davey. Over 1000 posters were distributed during health promotion in July in the NT.

Seeing Trachoma Elimination in Action

In early November 2012 the IEHU coordinated another trip out bush for six IEHU supporters, flying to Alice Springs and Tennant creek in Harold Mitchell's private plane.

The group packed a lot in to two days meeting ophthalmologist Dr Tim Henderson at the Alice Springs hospital and at Imparja television they were updated on health promotion and social marketing progress.

In Tennant Creek they met staff in the remote Aboriginal community controlled health service Anyininigi Congress. Trachoma nurse Sylvia Palmer made a presentation about considerably reduced trachoma rates and high level of community participation through art in the (300,000 sq km) Barkly region of the NT.



Iris and Milpa, Mr Harold Mitchell AC, Prof Hugh Taylor AC, Ms Stephanie Copus-Campbell, Prof John Funder AO, Ms Jane Halton PSM, Ms Maria Myers AO and Mr Russell Skelton at Tennant Creek November 2012

On the drive out to Ali Curung and Mungkarta the group got to know trachoma program staff better and met some of the local community. A big highlight was meeting the Mungkarta artists who had incorporated trachoma messages and Milpa images into a series of amazing community murals with local kids and a remarkable grass weaving of Milpa the trachoma goanna.

These important trips let program supporters see and hear first-hand how trachoma elimination and eye health awareness is put into practice. Crucially, they enable the views of people on the ground to be taken on board by program supporters and likewise the supporters being seen in person by the community helps to reinforce a shared commitment to the elimination of trachoma.



The Mungkarta Artists tribute to Milpa

Barkly Women on Trachoma and Bush Tucker

The trachoma women's radio series was launched at CAAMA Radio in early December which attracted Indigenous media across Australia and was attended by a crowd of trachoma program partners, Aboriginal organisations and community. The vital issues for local people are beginning to be coupled with trachoma elimination efforts in many communities across the NT.



Artists from Mungkarta Louise and Audrey Rankine, talk about trachoma and bush medicine. Photo courtesy of CAAMA Radio

This was highlighted by guest speakers Louise and Audrey Rankine, who talked about their important work of teaching traditional knowledge to children and while they do so they remind children to "...make sure they wash their faces and keep their eyes clean to get rid of trachoma". They have published a book "Bush Medicine Project - sharing bush medicine and bush tucker stories."

caama.com.au/tag/mungkarta-community

Social Marketing

Despite limited funding television and radio trachoma awareness continued. Imparja Television screens a trachoma advert in non-peak viewing times and CAAMA radio airs community service announcements seven days a week. An Australia Day special of the Channel 7's Weekend Sunrise program highlighted the issue of trachoma and the many program partners who are making a concerted effort to eliminate it.



Professor Taylor on Sunrise, Channel 7

Melbourne Football Club and Indigenous All Stars Support

Melbourne Football Club continues to support trachoma elimination at footy clinics in the NT co-ordinated with local services by Josie Atkinson at the IEHU.

The football players discuss trachoma and positively reinforce face and hand washing and holistic hygiene. These activities shine the spotlight on trachoma elimination and program success in different regions and bring together holistic hygiene promotion across agencies, and health programs.

At the pre-season training in Darwin the team talked about trachoma the importance of clean faces to 120 kids, many of who were Indigenous. Milpa was exceptionally energetic that day and in such demand he quickly learned how to sign autographs.



Milpa was more popular than some of the football players!

After endurance training at Jabiru including a 36km hike, the team made a great effort in conducting a trachoma elimination footy clinic.

The IEHU, CDC and Environmental Health staff worked with local agencies and around 60 primary, high school and Clontarf students learned about trachoma elimination and the importance of hygiene to good health.



The town firemen kept everyone cool on the Jabiru oval.

Alice Springs hosted the hugely popular Indigenous All Stars training camp and match against Richmond. (The All Stars won) More than 300 community members and 100 kids attended the hygiene health promotion activities.



Milpa and the kids at Yuendumu

Nineteen year old recruit, Dom Barry from Alice Springs was introduced as a new Trachoma Ambassador. Dom took the experience on board with pride and commitment. It has been said that he plays like a young Michael Long.



Dom Barry at Yuendumu Footy Oval

Community Adaptations

The Trachoma Story Kits are the basis of a multimedia social marketing campaign and local adaptations. The artwork is freely available on request for tailored approaches that include community members and their goals. This can create rich differences in settings and affirm and reflect culture, language and regional diversity

Milpa the Trachoma Goanna Style Guidelines and Permission for Use: iehu.unimelb.edu.au/the_trachoma_story_kit/milpa_guidelines

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