

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

### Close the Gap for Vision National Conference

Indigenous Eye Health (IEH), the University of Melbourne and Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT) co-hosted the 'Close the Gap for Vision by 2020: Strengthen & Sustain National Conference 2019' at the Alice Springs Convention Centre on the 14 & 15 March 2019.



Delegate group photo from CTGV19 conference.

Over 220 people involved in Indigenous eye health got together to share learnings and celebrate achievements over two days in Alice Springs. It was a wonderful event with lots of eye care related presentations and activities.

IEH have released a [full conference report](#), a [two-page summary](#) report and an [A3 poster](#) about the event. For a comprehensive conference wrap-up including photo galleries, presentations, #EyesInAction photo competition winner and more, [click here](#).



Leaky Pipe award winners (L-R) Shaun Tatipata, Heather Wilson, Presenter Trevor Buzzacott, Presenter Angee Ross, Tony Coburn and Jane Hager.

### Alice Springs Declaration

At the 2019 Close the Gap for Vision Conference, delegates unanimously endorsed a declaration urging governments to work together on housing, a key determinant of Indigenous health and wellbeing. Lack of housing maintenance can impact health including eye health. Read the full declaration [here](#).



Group photo from CTGV19 during unanimous agreement of declaration.

### Cultural Safety in the Eye Health Sector

Cultural safety is a critical component of ensuring successful eye care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients. Cultural competency of service providers and staff throughout the process of care helps ensure that the interaction of patients with the system is appropriate. In addition to ensuring patients feel as comfortable as possible during the process of care, culturally safe services help support better utilisation, compliance and improved navigation of the eye care pathway.

At the Close the Gap for Vision National Conference, Donna Murray, CEO of Indigenous Allied Health Australia, provided an engaging and challenging workshop on cultural safety. The discussion focussed on self-reflection and the real-life impact of culturally inappropriate service delivery. Donna also facilitated a panel discussion on strategies to develop the Indigenous eye care workforce.

A common framework that can support improved cultural awareness and capacities within organisations is a Reconciliation Action plan (RAP). The RAP framework, developed and overseen by Reconciliation Australia, is being adopted by a growing number of service providers and professional organisations across the eye health sector. The reconciliation journey helps to build relationships, respect and trust, all critical for a culturally safe eye care system.



Workforce - 'What needs to be done?' (L-R) Shaun Tatipata, Lauren Hutchinson, Facilitator: Donna Murray, Kerry-Ann Woods, Anne-Marie Banfield and Dr Kristopher Rallah-Baker.

Establishing the Indigenous identity of patients within health systems is important so that services and support can be appropriately provided. IEH is currently developing resources to support 'asking the question' in mainstream eye care facilities following best-practice guidelines developed by AIHW and AIDA.

### Filming with Melbourne Football Club

The Trachoma team were thrilled to head down to AAMI Park to film new community service announcement (CSAs) ads with Indigenous Eye Health ambassadors Melbourne Football Club (MFC). The new CSAs will be launched in June on the ['Clean Faces, Strong Eyes' Facebook page](#).



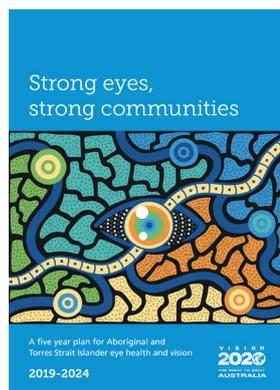
Jay Kennedy-Harris, Milpa, Steven May and Flash filming the new MFC CSAs.

## 'Strong eyes, strong communities' Launched

On March 25, Vision 2020 Australia launched '[Strong eyes, strong communities](#)' – A five year plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye health and vision, 2019-2024'. The Plan builds on the Roadmap and the work by Vision 2020 Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Committee members.

The development process of the Plan included consultations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies, and with organisations that administer health outreach funds across Australia. It focuses on: enhancing service delivery of eye health and vision care services for Indigenous Australians; strengthening regional partnerships and support for better cross-sectoral collaborations and improved access; embedding eye health in Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services and primary care; and eliminating trachoma.

IEH are continuing to work with Vision 2020 Australia and partners to support advocacy and ensure the Plan's recommendations and projected activities are appropriately funded and implemented.



## Council of Australian Governments Health Council

At the COAG Health Council meeting on 8 March 2019, Health Ministers considered four roadmaps as frameworks to deliver collaborative policies and programs to address key health challenges for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Ministers committed to working jointly to ending avoidable blindness, rheumatic heart disease, deafness and prevent and manage kidney disease. They discussed work to date to address these health conditions and opportunities to build on these efforts within the context of the Implementation Plan for the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013–2023. Ministers referred the roadmaps presented at COAG to the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council for review and reporting back in November 2019.

## Indigenous Health Research Fund

Ministers Ken Wyatt and Greg Hunt recently announced the \$160 million [Indigenous Health Research Fund](#) will be a 10-year research program under the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF). It will support practical, innovative research into the best approaches to prevention, early intervention, and treatment of a range of health conditions. The funding's first three flagship priorities are:

- Ending avoidable blindness
- Ending avoidable deafness
- Ending rheumatic heart disease



## Regional Implementation

### Roadmap Progress

Regional implementation of The Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision continues with IEH supporting and advising regional stakeholder networks to advance their reform and improvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye care. Specific activity includes attendance at meetings for regions in WA, NT, Qld, NSW/ACT, Vic and Tas.

IEH is also targeting Primary Health Networks (PHN) for engagement and advocacy to explore PHN contribution and involvement in Indigenous eye health – to date we have visited and met with 28 of the 31 PHNs. IEH is pleased to support the needs of regional and jurisdictional groups through technical advice and development of resources. Readers are welcome to share gnarly problems for our consideration and input.

Conference presentations for IEH activities and stories in the first half of 2019 include NRHA conference in Hobart in April, QAAMS in Adelaide in May and Lowitja International Indigenous Health in Darwin in June.

## Evaluating The Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision

In 2019, IEH will commence a formal evaluation of the progress and effectiveness of regional implementation of The Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision. The evaluation will inform future activities by sharing of learnings across regions about sustainable and transferable approaches to improving the provision of eye care for Indigenous Australians, and to identify any important lessons of relevance to the provision of other health services.

Independent evaluators will be engaged to undertake elements of this work which received specific philanthropic funding support.

### Participate in the evaluation

The evaluation will be co-designed with stakeholders from across the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye care pathway.

Expressions of interest to participate in the co-design process will be sought shortly. There will be three workshops over the course of the evaluation to:

1. Design the evaluation methods and tools
2. Provide input into interpretation of initial findings, and
3. Contribute to the final report and recommendations

Once the evaluation method is finalised, stakeholders from across Australia will have the opportunity to contribute by providing feedback into the evaluation.

We will continue to share information about how you can be involved through eBulletins, regional networks and on social media.

If you would like more information about the evaluation please contact: [Indigenous-EyeHealth@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:Indigenous-EyeHealth@unimelb.edu.au)

## Jurisdictional Snapshots

We have prepared [jurisdictional snapshots](#) of some of the key data available in Indigenous Eye Health Measures in Australia 2017, released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in April 2018.

These include analysis of eye care services and needs for Indigenous Australians at both jurisdictional and Primary Health Network level. The 2018 AIHW report demonstrates that progress is being made and the 2019 AIHW Indigenous Eye Health Measures report will provide additional indication of this progress.

## Jurisdictional Eye Health Coordinator Catch-up

An informal gathering of state and territory wide eye health coordinators was held prior to the National Conference. This was an opportunity for coordinators from fundholders and the ACCHO peak organisations to share experiences and network.

It was very well attended, with almost every State and Territory represented. Participants shared information about their roles, some of their existing challenges and also the progress they are making in advancing Indigenous eye health.



Participants attending the eye health coordinator catch-up in Alice Springs.

# TRACHOMA



## Environmental Health

Environmental health working groups have been established in the NT and SA. Discussions regarding an Aboriginal Environmental health workshop in WA are underway.

The working groups have been successful in building cross sectoral partnerships for improving environmental and infrastructure conditions for the elimination of trachoma and other infectious diseases. Negotiations are underway with two major remote community retail groups in the NT and SA for a store-wide policy to promote and sell affordable household cleaning and hygiene products.

Yash & Allan Wilson in Indulkana talking about the SAFE bathroom resource.



In the NT and SA, IEH is working closely with state and territory housing departments and partners like public health departments to empower community members to identify and report problems in bathrooms. Additionally, other health promotion resources are being developed in consultation with Aboriginal reference groups to increase awareness of the links between functioning health hardware and preventing infectious disease. In WA, community based environmental health officers are undertaking safe bathroom checks in many regions.

## Community Engagement Work in Laramba

Laramba is a remote Aboriginal community located 205km north west of Alice Springs and has a population of approximately 250 people. IEH has been working with the Laramba community and a group of organisations on a number of health promotion and engagement activities. The Laramba community have been enthusiastically working to eliminate trachoma and the Laramba Primary School has been doing a great job embedding hygiene routines into day-to-day practice and keeping faces and hands clean. Initiatives being explored include the installation of taps and sinks/troughs at the local youth hall, the development of a community cleaning program and various community health

## SAFE Bathroom Resource Development

IEH has adapted a 'SAFE bathroom' resource. It has an image of a bathroom with the various fixtures. House occupants can simply mark items in their bathroom that are broken and need to be fixed. The 'SAFE bathroom' resource can be used by housing authority (and other) staff when visiting communities and individual homes. It can be used as a health promotion resource to talk about healthy bathrooms and their importance in keeping people healthy and strong.

This new resource increases the understanding about the links between functioning health hardware and hygiene-related illness such as trachoma, gastro, rheumatic heart disease and otitis media. A number of organisations and individuals have helped develop this including the WA Department of Environmental Health and the NT Department of Housing and Community Development. To date, over 1,000 sheets have been distributed in Central Australia.



We welcome any feedback to Yash Srivastava (Environmental Health Improvements Manager) [yash.srivastava@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:yash.srivastava@unimelb.edu.au)



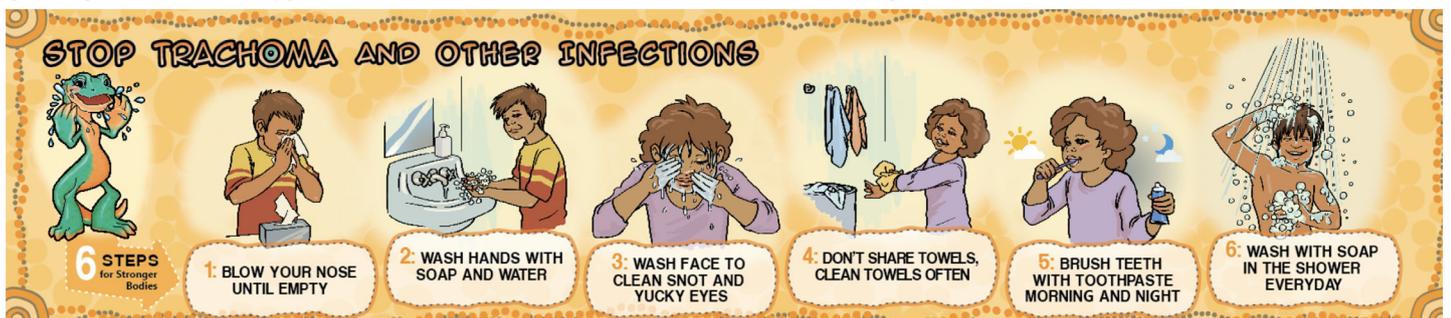
Engagement session with Laramba community.

## 6 Step Hygiene Routine Resource Development

The new 'Six Step' and companion 'Safe bathroom' resources (mentioned above) for houses will be the basis of new interactive activities, games and multimedia for children and adults to help everyone have stronger and healthier bodies. The six hygiene actions (which now include having a daily shower) and safe bathroom resources are being tested to check that they are clear and fit for purpose.

Aboriginal community members and staff in health, education and community work places in the NT, SA and WA are reviewing the resources, activities and games to help get the messages just right for everyday life in a community setting. The Health Promotion team at Central Australian Aboriginal Congress thoroughly scrutinised the new resources recently. As health promotion professionals they had a lot of insight and offered many excellent ideas about the best way to convey key hygiene messages/healthy actions to different audiences.

The Congress team enjoyed playing a few simple new games showing the links between infections, healthy actions and health hardware. This is something that will be explored further. Hygiene health promotion is of interest to many groups and organisations that aim to prevent childhood infections. These groups, such as Hearing Australia, Rheumatic Heart Disease Australia and the growing Darwin-based Hygiene Network, are keen to collaborate and share messages and ideas.



[facebook.com/CleanFacesStrongEyes](https://www.facebook.com/CleanFacesStrongEyes)

[Sign-up to the trachoma eBulletin here](#)

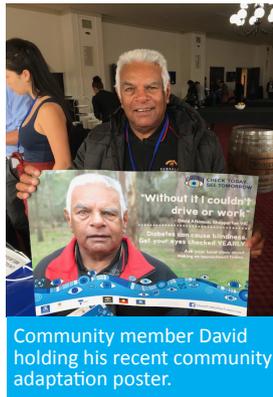


# Diabetes Eye Care

## Community Adaptations Support Local Ownership

IEH is supporting communities and organisations to adapt the 'Check Today, See Tomorrow' (CTST) diabetes eye care posters to promote Indigenous eye health.

CTST resources developed in 2015, were designed to allow local community adaptations. For example, photos of community heroes or champions can be easily replaced within the poster templates with a personal quote to support the CTST message. Some recent examples of community adaptations include Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative, Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-Operative (GEGAC), Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-Operative in Victoria.



Community member David holding his recent community adaptation poster.

Email IEH for further information and for assistance with your community adaptations. [Indigenous-EyeHealth@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:Indigenous-EyeHealth@unimelb.edu.au)

### \*\*\* Competition \*\*\*

Do you want to win a set of adapted posters for your local ACCHOs featuring local community members? Enter our competition by guessing who the eyes in the image below belong to! Email your answers to [Indigenous-EyeHealth@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:Indigenous-EyeHealth@unimelb.edu.au) Don't forget to include the name of your local Aboriginal Health Service. The winner will be announced on Monday 1 July 2019. Thanks to GEGAC for the awesome idea!

### Who's looking at you?



## Chris Lee appointed at Diabetes Australia

Diabetes Australia is pleased to announce the appointment of Chris Lee to a new role to strengthen the focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and diabetes. Diabetes Australia CEO, Professor Greg Johnson, said he was excited that Chris had taken on the challenge to help improve outcomes for First Nations people with diabetes. Read more [here](#).

## 20 Years of QAAMS

IEH were delighted to attend the 20th Anniversary of the Quality Assurance Aboriginal Medical Services (QAAMS) annual workshop held in Adelaide in May. We presented on the progress of Roadmap regional implementation, the steps required to perform MBS 12325 (retinal photography item number for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients with diabetes) and the 'Check Today, See Tomorrow' diabetes eye care resources. For more information visit the [QAAMS website](#).



## Retinal Camera Update

The Australian Government Department of Health has funded the delivery and training in the use of 155 retinal cameras ([see roll out map](#)) in primary health services, including Aboriginal Health Services, across Australia through the Provision of Eye Health Equipment and Training (PEHET) project. To support the uptake of retinal photography, two training courses were developed for Aboriginal Health Workers, nurses, diabetes educators, GPs and those trained to use the cameras. Further efforts are now being made to support embedding of retinal photography into primary health care processes, including the billing of [Medicare Item 12325](#). Access the BHVI retinal camera training [here](#). IEH also has a [diabetic retinopathy grading course](#) produced with CERA and accredited for CPD by ACRRM in addition to [RAHC modules](#) on eye care and diabetes eye care.

## Talking Eye Health with Emerging Leaders

IEH were thrilled to head along to Robertson Barracks in Darwin with Melbourne Football Club (MFC) to catch-up with a group of young Indigenous women participating in a leadership program with the Stars Foundation. IEH spoke about eye health, including trachoma and diabetes eye care and the girls tried out simulation glasses from Vision Australia that show you what it's like when your vision is affected by diabetes. Milpa the trachoma goanna even made a surprise appearance! A big thank you to the young women participating in the program, Danila Dilba, MFC and the staff at the barracks for a great day.



Milpa visiting participants of the Stars Foundation leadership program.

## IEH Featured in mivision

Indigenous Eye Health: Going Ahead with Trachoma Elimination, mivision, May 2019. Read the article [here](#).

## Professor Sandra Eades joins the IEH Advisory Board

IEH is thrilled to announce Professor Sandra Eades (Associate Dean (Indigenous), Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, University of Melbourne) has joined the Indigenous Eye Health Advisory Board. Karen Hale-Robertson, Deputy Chief Executive Officer from CheckUp in Queensland, and Dr Marianne Wood, Public Health Medical Officer for AHCWA in WA, joined the Advisory Board late 2018.



Professor Sandra Eades

## Additional funding announced for IEH

IEH was delighted by the recent announcement of Ministers Greg Hunt and Ken Wyatt to provide funding for the next four years to enable IEH to continue providing technical support and advocacy for the implementation of the Roadmap.

## Staffing update

IEH would like to welcome new staff members Angela Thiel (Senior Program Manager Trachoma Team), Lesley Martin (Trachoma Community Engagement Officer), Guy Gillor (Academic Specialist, Indigenous Eye Health Policy & Practice) and Jordan Bryan (EA to Professor Hugh Taylor). IEH farewells Allara Pearce, Tina De Melo & Philip Roberts and thanks them for their contributions and wishes them all the best for the future.

## Thank you

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