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Key Messages

- Vision loss accounts for 11% of the Indigenous health gap
- Regional coordination, stakeholder engagement and data sharing can improve Indigenous eye health outcomes
- The Grampians region provides an excellent case study of success in enhanced service provision

Background

- Indigenous children are born with better eyesight than mainstream, but by adulthood there is 6 times more blindness and 3 times as much low vision
- Main causes of vision loss are refractive error, cataract, diabetic retinopathy and trachoma
- Up to 98% of diabetes-related blindness is preventable if detected and treated early

Policy Frameworks

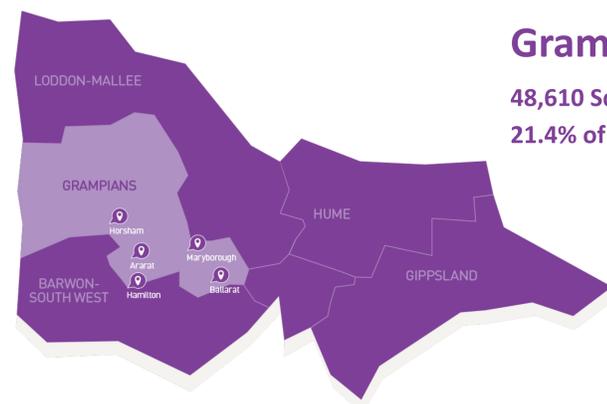
- The *Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision* is an evidence-based framework to improve Indigenous eye health
- Implemented in 15 regions across Australia covering 35% of the Indigenous population
- Eye health has specific focus in Victoria, underpinned by the Roadmap, via *Koolin Balit: Victorian Government Strategic Directions for Aboriginal Health*. This includes:
 - A statewide eye health advisory committee overseeing Indigenous eye care
 - Funding for four regional eye health projects

Health Promotion

- Health promotion material developed in the Grampians improved awareness of eye health services
- Identified gap and developed regionally appropriate health promotion messages
- Production of digital music videos, interviews/ personal stories and print media such as posters and brochures



Grampians health promotion development



Grampians Region

48,610 Sq Km
21.4% of Victorian Area

Crucial Elements

- The Grampians is one of four Victorian regions with an Indigenous eye health project
- Crucial to service improvements in the Grampians were:
 - Specific funding to improve Indigenous eye health
 - Recruitment of a dedicated project officer & agreed regional plan
 - Strong engagement with Aboriginal Medical Services (AMS)
 - Engaged and coordinated stakeholder group taking steps to overcome obstacles and address gaps
 - Sharing of data and information for service improvement



Eye exam at Ballarat & District Aboriginal Cooperative

Grampians Successes

- Service improvements for Indigenous people:
 - Outreach visits and optometry consultations were equivalent to the 2014 total by mid-2015
 - 75% of patients with diabetes had an annual retinal screen, compared with 20% nationally
 - Increase in cataract surgery referrals and eye examinations for people with diabetes
- New slit lamps, retinal cameras and optometry services in AMS
- Engagement and service provision from mainstream providers
- Increased uptake of subsidised spectacle scheme
- Leadership from local Department of Health & Human Services and regional AMS
- Active stakeholder group overseeing progress in region *
- Better eye care referral pathways & coordination, and engagement with mainstream service providers
- Development of health promotion material

* (Vic Department of Health and Human Services Grampians office, Ballarat & District Aboriginal Cooperative, Budja Budja Aboriginal Cooperative, the University of Melbourne, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, Victorian College of Optometry)

