

# Optometry in ACCHOs - Pathways, Partnerships and Opportunities for Education

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## Introduction

Optometrists deliver comprehensive eyecare services in many ACCHOs across Australia at the primary and secondary care level enabling early detection, timely treatment, triaging and referrals for major eye conditions. Recent national epidemiological surveys still highlight that the eyecare sector is not meeting the needs of a large proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and demonstrates there is room for improvement.



**Figure 1.** Optometrists providing eyecare services in partnership with ACCHOs

## Prevention of Avoidable Vision Loss

Preventing avoidable vision loss requires optometrists to;

- (1) **engage** in close partnerships with community members and primary health care staff to enable uptake of eye and health services
- (2) **develop** effective referral pathways and sustainable service systems
- (3) **participate** in advocacy roles with other Aboriginal organisations and
- (4) **co-design** policy and systems with Aboriginal communities.

## Opportunities in Education

Optometry within ACCHOs provides several opportunities for capacity building with primary health care staff and supporting clinical placements for health care students. Optometry students and recent graduates are encouraged to participate in eye care programs within ACCHOs, but further work is needed to enhance educational opportunities and strengthen the workforce into the future.

Optometry student placements/visits in conjunction with the *Visiting Optometrists Scheme* in ACCHOs

Integrating cultural safety training into optometry course curricula (OCANZ & optometry schools engaging with community practitioners)

Scholarships/travel grants for students to attend conferences on Indigenous health

Community talks and presentations

Collaboration with regional eye coordinators

Interprofessional practice and education for students and practitioners in optometry, medicine, nursing, Aboriginal health workers, etc.

Upskilling and ongoing support for optometrists new to working in ACCHOs

Development of policy, program and systems design

### **Table 1.** Examples of educational opportunities

There are many successful and localised models of effective optometry partnerships, educational programs, and integration into holistic multidisciplinary primary care teams in ACCHOs; this poster presentation aims to facilitate discussions on examples of success, as well as opportunities for improvement.

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