

Optometry and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Care in 2040

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In 2018, Optometry Australia undertook the Optometry 2040 project, aiming to identify likely and preferred futures for optometry, optometrists, and community eye health. Using proven techniques and in partnership with futures studies experts, Optometry Australia consulted optometrists across the country, and key stakeholders who influence the sector, to identify plausible and preferred futures and the pathways to realising them.

The project identified seven key trends which will impact the future of optometry, including technology, the rise of consumer centric care and increasing use of big data (read more [here](#)).

Change isn't always positive, yet it brings opportunity if it can be embraced and channelled. In recognising and adapting to these trends, Optometry 2040 identified a plausible future for optometry which will enable broad, timely access to quality and efficient eye care (present [Optometry 2040 video](#)).

Offering consumers the eye care they want – as well as the eye care they need, this preferred scenario sees the growth of 'partici-patients', prompting a role transformation across health care and pushing clinicians towards 'knowledge translators'.

The services provided by optometry will no longer be solely offered through face-to-face interaction, but instead facilitated by technology and available to consumers in a range of different ways. Less complex eye care will be offered through automated, tech-enabled examinations available in the home, via health kiosks, and in primary care clinics; allowing optometrists to more directly engage with patients who have more complex care or support needs.

Increased collaboration with other clinicians will be common and care models will be diverse - optometrists will be integrated within primary health care 'super clinics'; work through mobile and virtual practices; and are a fundamental part of the tertiary eye-care team. Within traditional practice settings, technology will enable shorter diagnostic consult time and more comprehensive patient engagement.

Much of this is already happening within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye care setting – with optometry involvement in VOS and outreach service delivery; participation in mobile clinics like the IDEAS Van and Lions Outback Vision Van; upskilling and training of local primary health care workers to screen and triage patients; and engagement with telehealth.

In this broader, tech-enabled, patient-centred future of optometry, how does the role for optometrists evolve within the ACCHO or Indigenous-led primary health care setting? What are the barriers and challenges that need to be considered?