

Eye health coordination in Queensland's west

Presenters: Lachlan Rich and Tony Coburn, CheckUp

Provision of eye health to people in 32 communities in the Central West and North West Queensland Hospital and Health Service regions is complex. Lachlan Rich has recently prepared eye health mapping reports for each of the regions based on structured interviews with service hosts and providers. Lachlan's work has been a collaborative initiative of CheckUP, the Fred Hollows Foundation and the Western Queensland PHN.

The mapping process included visits to the majority of communities. Where possible these were observational visits accompanying a visiting optometrist. In each region, a stakeholder workshop was conducted as an initial step. Existing cataract, refractive error and diabetic retinopathy pathways were mapped. These were reviewed and annotated during the mapping process. Stakeholders agreed on best practice pathways at a workshop after circulation of the draft report.

Stakeholder concerns expressed at the workshops and during interviews included common Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal pathways, "Diabetes does not hurt", scheduling conflicts, variable patient record access, patient journeys, opportunistic use of retinal cameras, service fragmentation, differentiating between presentations and need, unreliable diabetes prevalence measurements, under-referral for diabetics in their thirties, optometry in GP care plan cycles of care, awareness of allied health services into centres, patient travel subsidy scheme (PTSS) costs, telehealth, and VOS underservicing.

Coordination of eye health is not a panacea, but appointment of an Eye Health Coordinator was one of a number of recommendations in both regions. Additionally, other recommendations would be best achieved in the presence of sustained coordination rather than through piecemeal allocation of coordination tasks.