

Key lessons for closing the gap for vision

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There has been progress to close the gap for vision for Indigenous Australians, with lessons to be shared between people and places. Vision loss represents 11% of the health gap, and Indigenous adults have 6 times the rates of blindness and three times as much low vision compared with non-Indigenous Australians.

The *Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision (2012)* comprises an evidenced-based set of multidisciplinary recommendations to achieve equitable eye health outcomes. It addresses the four major eye conditions that affect Indigenous people: refractive error, cataract, diabetic retinopathy and trachoma. The *Roadmap* outlines coordinated regional, jurisdictional and national action, and has wide support from the Aboriginal health sector, federal and jurisdictional governments, and the non-government and eye care sectors.

Currently the *Roadmap* is being implemented in 12 regions that cover 35% of the Indigenous population. There have been both successes and challenges in implementation, but progress is being made on regional action to improve eye health outcomes and services to Indigenous Australians. These regional achievements also link to broader jurisdictional and national action, such as jurisdictional eye health committees, that affect Indigenous people and places across Australia.

For example, in Victoria significant progress has been made in 2014 in implementing aspects of the *Roadmap* under *Koolin Balit: Victorian Government strategic directions for Aboriginal health 2012-2022*. These include a specific focus on Indigenous eye health and a statewide eye health advisory committee to coordinate eye care in Victoria, in addition to particular regional actions.

Specific regions, such as Central Australia/Barkly and the Grampians, have made progress through elements that are a model for other regional areas of Australia, including specific funding for eye health, dedicated eye health project officers and regional stakeholder advisory groups.

Progress outlined in this presentation will highlight possibilities for how the gap in vision can be reduced with effective and coordinated regional improvements, linking in with jurisdictional and national action.