

The Western NSW Eye Health Partnership Program

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The achievements and challenges of the Western NSW Eye Health Partnership Program will be discussed in this presentation. The program, funded by The Fred Hollows Foundation and managed by the NSW Rural Doctors Network, aims to improve the access to eye health services for populations in Western NSW, *with a particular focus on eye care for Aboriginal populations*, by developing a coherent and sensible system of coordinated eye care in the region.

The program is underpinned by a partnership of eighteen service providers and key stakeholders including nine Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services, the Bila Muuji Aboriginal Health Services Inc, The Fred Hollows Foundation, Brien Holden Vision Institute, Vision CRC, the Outback Eye Service, the Western NSW and Far West Medicare Locals and the Western NSW Local Health District.

The challenges faced by the partnership included: the lack of coordination given the myriad of service providers; the lack of information regarding services and referral pathways; the lack of advocacy and brokerage; as well as some gaps in services particularly for Aboriginal patients.

The value of the program has been in bringing a multidisciplinary focus to all three levels of eye care (primary, secondary and tertiary) as well as highlighting the strengths of embedding eye care in all Aboriginal primary care services including chronic care programs.

Analytical findings from Services Mapping and Services Planning exercises and insights from qualitative research will be presented and issues that remain to be solved will be discussed.