First National Report on Indigenous Eye Health Measures

Eye diseases and vision problems are common long-term health conditions experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the Minister for Indigenous Health, Ken Wyatt, today welcomed the release of a report that looks at the effectiveness of national eye health programs.

Launching the *Indigenous Eye Health Measures 2016* report, released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), Minister Wyatt said that one-third of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people reported one or more long-term eye conditions in 2016.

“The three main causes of vision impairment in adults were uncorrected refractive error, cataract and diabetic retinopathy,” Minister Wyatt said.

“Our positive side, the report indicates that more Indigenous Australians are accessing eye health services provided through specific service programs.

“The report finds that in 2014-15 more Indigenous Australians received an eye examination than in the previous twelve months; that the gap in accessing cataract surgery compared to non-Indigenous Australians is narrowing; and the rate of blindness for Indigenous Australians has decreased from 1.9 per cent in 2008 to 0.3 per cent in 2016.

"While the report shows improvements are being made in Closing the Gap in Indigenous eye health, more needs to be done.

“This report is important because from here we can build an evidence base for monitoring changes in Indigenous eye health, and identify service delivery gaps at the regional level,” Minister Wyatt said.
Key findings in the report reveal that:

- a lower proportion of Indigenous Australians with diabetes had a diabetic eye examination in the preceding 12 months, compared with non-Indigenous Australians; and
- In 2014–15, the median waiting time for elective cataract surgery was longer for Indigenous Australians than for non-Indigenous Australians. Some Indigenous Australians are waiting more than one year for cataract surgery.

“We now have a very valuable source of data we can use to improve eye health through better detection, management and treatment of eye disease in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities,” Minister Wyatt said.

The *Indigenous Eye Health Measures* report is the first national report on the Indigenous eye health measures.

It brings together comprehensive data from a range of sources and presents this information at the national, state and regional level.

The Australian Government is investing around $72 million over 2013-14 to 2020-21 to improve eye health for Indigenous Australians.


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