MEDIA RELEASE

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New Survey Provides Valuable Data on the Status of Eye Health Conditions

The Australian Government today launched the National Eye Health Survey Report on the prevalence and causes of vision impairment and blindness around the nation.

Assistant Minister for Rural Health, Dr David Gillespie, and Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care, Ken Wyatt AM, MP, said the Report was conducted by Vision 2020 Australia and the Centre for Eye Research Australia and involved completing a series of eye tests on around 5,000 Australian across 30 geographical areas.

Participants tested were adult Indigenous Australians 40 years and over, and non-Indigenous Australians 50 years and older.

"Up to date national data on the burden of vision impairment and blindness in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians will continue to inform the Australian Government on future policy directions.

"Certain population groups are at particular risk of vision impairment and blindness including Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander people, older people, those with a family history of eye disease and people with diabetes," Dr Gillespie said.

Minister Wyatt said the report found that the main causes of blindness and visual impairment across Australia were uncorrected refractive error, cataract, age-related macular degeneration, and diabetic retinopathy.

“The National Eye Health Survey Report provides us with valuable data in order to target eye health conditions in more integrated ways, giving us better health outcomes.

“The Coalition Government is committed to addressing preventable vision loss and blindness in our communities. Having current and accurate data will help us better understand and address the issues,” Minister Wyatt said.

The Report highlighted that whilst the eye health gap between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Australians was improving, there was work to be done in further closing the gap.

As part of the Coalition Government's ongoing commitment to closing the eye health gap, from the first of November, a new Medicare Benefits item for the screening of diabetic retinopathy using retinal cameras will be introduced, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people eligible for testing once per year.

The Australian Government provided funding of $1.776m to support the National Eye Health Survey.

More information about the National Eye Health Survey Report is available on the Vision 2020 Australia website.

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