

# AFL star's sights on eye disease



**ESSENDON** AFL player Patrick 'Paddy' Ryder has set his sights on

tackling the high rates of eye disease in Indigenous communities.

Ryder joined with peak health bodies Vision 2020 Australia and the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) on World Sight Day (October 10) to urge Australians to look after their sight.

The ruckman's call is particularly important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, who have an increased risk of eye disease and vision loss.

"Blindness rates in Indigenous adults are six times higher, and vision

Jennifer Gersbeck said.

Ryder said that as an Indigenous man, the high rates of eye disease in the community were concerning.

"I am encouraging Australians from all walks of life to get their eyes tested, but particularly Indigenous Australians," he said.

"Closing the gap for vision is very important and I hope that by getting my eyes tested I will encourage others to do the same."

## Conditions

Four main conditions account for most vision impairment and blindness in Indigenous Australians: refractive error, cataracts, diabetic retinopathy and trachoma.

With a diabetes epidemic sweeping the world, diabetic

are three times more likely to have type two diabetes than non-Indigenous Australians," Ms Gersbeck said.

The number is even higher for Indigenous people in remote areas.

"From the 37 per cent of Indigenous adults who have diabetes, 13 per cent have already lost vision but, importantly, 98 per cent of blindness from diabetes is preventable or treatable with early detection and timely treatment," Ms Gersbeck said.

Trachoma is a major blinding infectious eye disease caused by poor hygiene, and can be treated with surgery and antibiotics.

"Despite falling rates, trachoma still affects around 60 per cent of outback Indigenous communities. But

Optometrist Angela Hall tests Paddy's eyes on World Sight Day.

