

# The Indigenous Eye Health Unit Newsletter: June 2014



## Regional Implementation Roundtable

Over 60 people from across Australia attended a roundtable meeting on 13 March in Melbourne to discuss learnings and progress on the Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision - evidenced based policy recommendations to eliminate unnecessary vision loss for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Roadmap was published in 2012 after extensive consultation in Aboriginal, health, government and eye care sectors. It has been endorsed by NACCHO, OA, RANZCO and Vision 2020 Australia. Federal government support includes funding the Indigenous Eye Health Unit (IEHU) at the University of Melbourne to progress elements of the Roadmap. The Roadmap is currently being implemented in nine regions in WA, NT, QLD, NSW and Victoria and the meeting allowed key people from these regions to discuss successes and challenges in achieving Roadmap changes. Key speakers at the roundtable included Samantha Palmer, First Assistant Secretary in the Indigenous and Rural Health Division of Australian Department of Health, Lisa Briggs, CEO of NACCHO and Professor Hugh Taylor, head of IEHU at the University of Melbourne.



Left to right: Prof. Hugh Taylor, IEHU, Lisa Briggs, CEO NACCHO, Genevieve Quilty, CEO OA, Jennifer Gersbeck, CEO Vision2020Australia, Samantha Palmer, FAS Department of Health, Prof. Kerry Arabena, University of Melbourne & David Andrews, CEO RANZCO



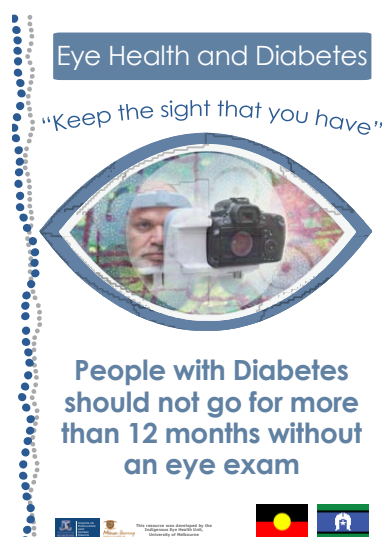
## Health Promotion: Eye Health and Diabetes

The IEHU is in the process of focus testing a suite of health promotion resource materials aimed at increasing awareness in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander urban communities.

Consultations have occurred with Melbourne based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and Aboriginal health workers from a number of stakeholder organisations including the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, Australian College of Optometry and the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital.

Consultation has enabled the IEHU to gain consensus on key messages, artwork and colour schemes in order to deliver a strong, concise message to the Aboriginal community.

Key messages including: "Do you know what the back of your eye looks like?" and "People with Diabetes should not go for more than 12 months without an eye exam?" and "Keep the sight that you have?" are important phrases that aim to build individual and community awareness to effectively increase the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living with Diabetes being tested for Diabetic Retinopathy.



A range of images including photographs and artwork have been developed for the suite of resources that include a poster, pamphlet, factsheet and flip chart for both community members and health workers to support patients who have been diagnosed with diabetes and are yet to have an eye examination.

## The Lowitja Institute held its 2nd National CQI Conference and Congress Lowitja in Melbourne on 17-20 March 2014

An Indigenous Eye Health booth was set up providing eye care information for delegates with partner organisations including the Australian College of Optometry, Brien Holden Vision Institute, Fred Hollows Foundation and the Indigenous Eye Health Unit.



Left to right: Genevieve Napper ACO, Mitchell Anjou IEHU, Anna Morse BHVI, Andrea Boudville IEHU, Anyati Yashadhana BHVI, Colina Waddell BHVI

### Trachoma Update:

#### Milpa At The MCG

Milpa the Trachoma Goanna was one of 20 mascots in the inaugural Queen's Birthday Mascot Race at the MCG where Melbourne Football Club (MFC) played Collingwood Football Club.



### Four Step Hygiene Banner

The Four Step Hygiene poster created by Central Australian Aboriginal Congress was converted into a 2.3m x 1.2m banner by IEHU. The banner is very popular in schools to reinforce clean faces and holistic hygiene health promotion.



Left to right: Anna Huigen, CDC, Lily McDonnell, graphic designer & Jaqueline Arnold, CDC

### Resources and Adaptations Reminder

Don't forget trachoma resources are free including delivery. Online ordering available for The Trachoma Story Kits, A2 Community Flipchart, Trachoma Resources DVD, Milpa Tattoos, Melbourne Football Club posters at:

[http://iehu.unimelb.edu.au/the\\_trachoma\\_story\\_kit/ordering](http://iehu.unimelb.edu.au/the_trachoma_story_kit/ordering)

Other resources can be downloaded and IEHU staff are available to provide support to develop localised adaptations and technical advice.

### WA update

The creative trachoma team at Country Health WA Midwest have developed resources to compliment the Trachoma Story Kit flipchart and other materials. These include; water bottles, Milpa stickers, fabric paint mini pillow-cases and a fun large scale Milpa cut out for taking photos with children. Milpa is very popular and the children are having lots of fun as they learn how clean faces and good hygiene help them be well and strong.

### NT update

Health promotion officer, Joan Whitehead left Congress recently after a whirlwind two years. Joan worked with trachoma partners and communities in Central Australia. Joan developed many engaging health promotion tools to encourage consistent personal hygiene routines that reduce infection transmission risk. One example is the Clean Faces, Healthy Places activities in schools which addresses the importance of washing facilities and other environmental factors that make healthier choices easier.

## Ann Miller, IEHU supporter guest column

Late last year I approached Hugh Taylor to offer support for the work which the Indigenous Eye Health Unit is doing to reduce the incidence of trachoma in Indigenous populations. In late May I went with Hugh and 3 of his colleagues to Alice Springs and Ti Tree, 200 km to the north, to see their work first-hand.

It was Reconciliation Week and the boys from the Melbourne Football Club, great supporters of Hugh's work, were in Alice. We went to a couple of schools, footballers always present, talking to the children about the importance of clean faces, healthy eating and exercising and not smoking and then kicking footballs with the children.

We went to the launch of the eye health online training modules for trachoma and for diabetic retinopathy; these modules are to be used by health workers working with Indigenous people throughout Australia. I met and talked to a number of health workers, several of them Indigenous people.

Most heart-warming was the visit to Ti Tree School; the children washed their hands, washed their faces, then had a tattoo put on the back of their hands, which permitted them to join the MFC boys and kick footballs. I had the happy task of applying the tattoos to these little hands.



There was also the Fred Hollows Foundation launch of Trachoma sore eyes story, written by a local Indigenous woman; it was simple, with the text and drawings geared to small children, and the text in the local language and in English. There was a new song about trachoma written by another local Indigenous woman for the children to sing.



It was a very rewarding five days, learning that real progress is being made and seeing in part just how this is being done.

## Free online training modules

On Thursday 29 May, Major General the Honourable Michael Jeffery, AC, AO (Mil), CVO MC (Retd) launched two free online training resources one called Eye Health and Diabetes and a revised trachoma module at the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress in Alice Springs.



The Indigenous Eye Health Unit (IEHU) and Remote Area Health Corps (RAHC) developed the modules for health professionals undertaking placements in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and for others who would like to learn more about eye health.

Annual eye exams for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with diabetes, along with timely treatment can prevent up to 98% of vision loss and blindness. The Eye Health and Diabetes module is one of the first free online courses providing training on key elements regarding the risk factors, assessment and management of diabetic retinopathy using the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) guidelines, as well as providing clinically relevant information for the diagnosis, treatment and pathways of care.

The modules have been developed with financial support from the Aspen Foundation and CBM Australia. The modules have been developed to meet criteria for Continuing Professional Development programs with RACGP, ACRRM, OA and APNA.

Visit the following link to see the resources:  
[http://iehu.unimelb.edu.au/the\\_trachoma\\_story\\_kit/training\\_resources](http://iehu.unimelb.edu.au/the_trachoma_story_kit/training_resources)



Left to right:  
IEHU- Josie Atkinson, Robyn Tapp and Fiona Lange  
RAHC- Philip Roberts, Aaron Richardson and Genevieve Lewis

## Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust meeting

There was a very successful meeting in Alice Springs co-hosted by NACCHO and the Australian Board of the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust (QEDJT) recently. This was attended by former Governor General, Major General the Honourable Michael Jeffery, AC, AO (Mil), CVO MC (Retd), Marvin Weinman (QEDJT), Justin Mohammed, Chair NACCHO and representatives of many of the communities in Central Australia, South Australia and Western Australia to review the current trachoma activities and look at what else is needed to finally eliminate trachoma from Australia. The need for community oversight and community based health advocates pushing clean faces and safe bathrooms with links to health and education and housing was discussed. Further steps are to build an alliance of interested stakeholders and develop jurisdictional and national consensus to support the implementation of such a programme. The meeting was facilitated by Professor Kerry Arabena.

## Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision - Victorian update

Implementation of the Roadmap continues to progress in Victoria. Three Victorian Department of Health regions (Barwon South West, Grampians and Loddon Mallee) are in the process of recruiting local project officers to assist in implementation of Roadmap regional activities. The eye health project officers will progress actions such as mapping current eye health services, identifying barriers to care and improving coordination and referral pathways for Indigenous peoples. The project officers will work closely with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services under the auspices of *Koolin Balit - Victorian Government strategic directions for Aboriginal Health 2012-2022*.

A fourth region, North and West Metropolitan, is funding a project with the Australian College of Optometry that will allow appointment of an NGO based project officer. In an additional region, work continues with stakeholders in Southern Metropolitan who are interested in 'accelerator' meetings resulting from the Regional Implementation Roundtable in March. The Unit remains involved in the statewide Koolin Balit Aboriginal Eye Health Advisory Group.



## Congratulations to Professor Hugh Taylor

Professor Taylor became the President of the International Council of Ophthalmology (ICO) on 5th April 2014 at the World Ophthalmology Congress in Tokyo, Japan. He is the first Australian and the first from the southern hemisphere to hold the position. He will be the President for the next two years. The ICO is the leading organisation for professional associations of ophthalmologists from around the world.

Professor Taylor has also been recognised by Johns Hopkins University in the United States where he was inducted into the Society of Scholars on 7th April. This acknowledgement honours distinguished former Johns Hopkins faculty who have gained marked distinction in their fields working elsewhere.

Hugh Taylor was a Professor of Ophthalmology at the Wilmer Institute at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore with joint appointments in the Departments of Epidemiology and International Health for many years.



*Hugh Taylor was presented with the medal of office from the out-going ICO President Bruce Spivey at the World Ophthalmology Congress in Japan.*

## New Staff Updates and goodbye

We welcome Dr Marian Abouzied, Uma Jatka and Dr Peggy Chiang who have all joined the IEHU in 2014. They are working on supporting the implementation of the Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision in the regions.

Maurice Shipp has provided important input developing health promotion materials around diabetes and eye care. We are sorry to see him leave and wish him well for the future.

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