

East Gippsland Aboriginal Eye Health (EGAEH) Partnership

BACKGROUND

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up 2.8% of the East Gippsland population, higher than the state average of 0.8 %. Vision loss represents a significant proportion of the Aboriginal health gap, with Aboriginal adults having 3 times the rate of blindness and 3 times the rate of vision loss as non-Aboriginal Australians.

As a part of the Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision the East Gippsland Aboriginal Eye Health (EGAEH) partnership was established. This is a collaboration between local Aboriginal and other health organisations, VACCHO, Australian College of Optometry and Melbourne University with the objective to close the gap for vision with local Aboriginal people.

PARTNERS (include logos)

East Gippsland Primary Care Partnership

Australian College of Optometry

Bairnsdale Regional Health Service

Consultant optometrist

Department of Health and Human Services

Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Cooperative

Gippsland Primary Health Network

Lake Tyers Health and Children's Services

Lakes Entrance Aboriginal Health Association

Indigenous Eye Health, Melbourne University

Moogji Aboriginal Council East Gippsland

Orbost Regional Health.

Vision Australia

METHOD

East Gippsland Primary Care Partnership support the EGAEH partnership by offering facilitation support, data collection and research and ensuring we have an appropriate mix of organisations participating in the partnership.

We come together quarterly to map the journey of Aboriginal people in East Gippsland through all stages of eye health, screening and treatment. This data identifies the gaps and challenges local Aboriginal people face for eye care and as a result, the partnership collaborates on opportunities to develop local community approaches that improve eye health access and outcomes.

OUTCOMES

This partnership is the first time local ACCOs and other partners have come together to work collaboratively on Aboriginal eye health in East Gippsland.

Using obtained data and population-based targets, the EGAEH identified barriers in accessing locally based follow up and treatment, often resulting in trips to Melbourne or broader Gippsland. The partnership developed culturally appropriate ideas for improvement in the local person's eye care journey and drove service system change to address these.

Some achievements has been increasing annual eye checks for Aboriginal patients with diabetes and improving access to treatment. This was accomplished by:

- Supporting local Aboriginal health organisations who have recently received retinopathy camera to screen people.
- Raising the profile of diabetes and diabetes related eye exams with local practitioners.
- Successfully bringing ocular injections to Bairnsdale – enabling Aboriginal people to access a local service instead of traveling to broader Gippsland or Melbourne.

EGAEH partnership has also successfully raised the Aboriginal eye health profile in the community via:

- Data sharing to identify gaps and monitor progress.
- Conversations about service coordination between Aboriginal and mainstream services.
- Increased awareness of the subsidised spectacle scheme.
- Developing local resources with local Aboriginal people on them.
- Supporting local eye health promotion events, which saw an increase in eye screening.
- Presenting at the 2019 Close the Gap for Vision annual conference.

The partnership has also had an abstract accepted for presentation at the 5th Annual Ngar-Wu Wanyarra Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Conference in October 2019.