



**FIRST NATIONS  
EYE HEALTH ALLIANCE**  
***Our Vision, Our Way***

# **Advancing Eye Health Equity through FNEHA**

*\*Disclaimer: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are advised that this presentation contains references and/or pictures of deceased people.*



# **Acknowledgement of Country**



# A little about me

**Dr Thomas Mylne**

Proud Gangalu man from Central Queensland

Ophthalmology Registrar, Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital

Former Pharmacy Officer, Royal Australian Air Force

Board Member, Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association

Advocate for self-determination, harm minimisation and LGBTIQ+ inclusion



# Our Vision Our Way

Building eye health equity through:

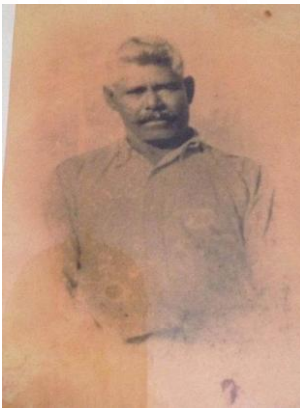
- Self-determination and community control
- Cultural knowledge and lived experience
- Shared accountability across the eye health sector



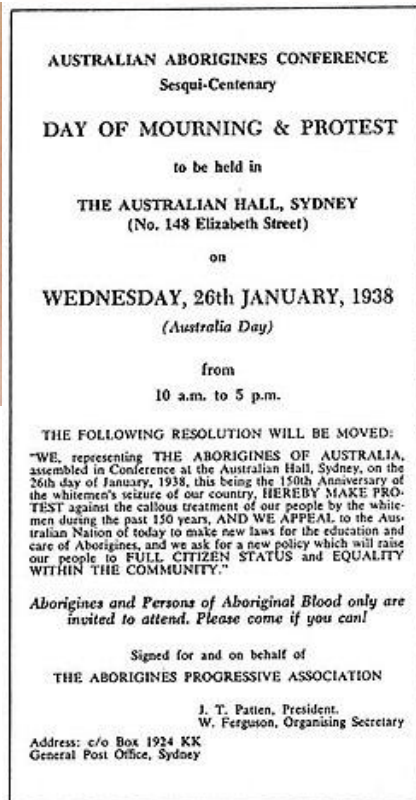
FNEHA Board, Gala Dinner, 2025 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health Conference, Noongar Country



# The push for Self Determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people....



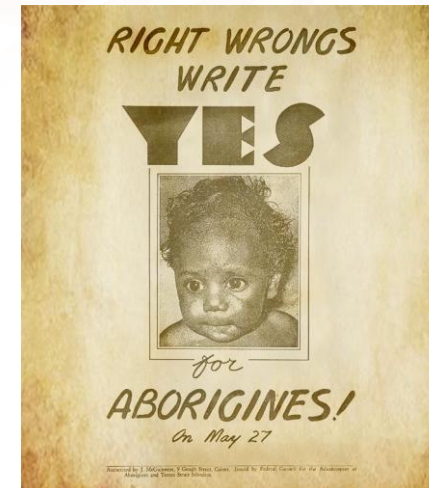
Founding member  
Aboriginal  
Progressive  
Association  
Arthur Clifford Burns



1938 National Day of Mourning



1965 Freedom Rides lead by  
Charles Perkins  
<https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/1965-freedom-ride>



1967 Referendum On 27 May 1967, Australians voted to change the Constitution so that like all other Australians, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples would be counted as part of the population and the Commonwealth would be able to make laws for them.  
<https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/1967-referendum>



<https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/from-struggle-to-triumph-iconic-redfern-ams-marks-50-years/9wyp7ty1u>

So in **July 1971 the Aboriginal Medical Service Cooperative Ltd (AMS)** was born, initially staffed by rostered volunteer doctors, nursing sisters and Shirley Smith as field officer.  
<https://amsredfern.org.au/our-history-future/>



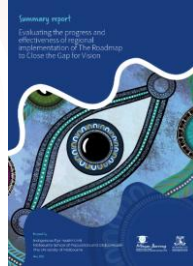
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# The Evolution of Self Determination in First Nations Eye Health



Members of the National Trachoma and Eye Health Project team (L-R): Mr Bob Liddle, Jack Waterford, Fred Hollows, David Moran, Gabi Hollows, Reg Murray, Larry Tedesco, Gordon Briscoe, Rosie Denham, Trevor Buzzacott and Jilpa Jones, kneeling.



Evaluation talked about importance for First Nations Leadership



All the deadly mob at the workshop

First Workshop asking what eye care services should look like into 2030



Endorsement to incorporate FNEHA into Eye Health Peak and discussion of prevention



2024 First Nation's meeting talking about next national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye health plan

1976-78

2008

2019

2022

May 2022

May 2023

July 2023

May 2024

May 2025

National Trachoma program treated over 60-100K people for trachoma nationally

Indigenous Eye Health Unit established Roadmap to Close the gap for vision developed



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group (ATSIRG) now the National Experts Group on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health (NEGATSIEH)

Expanded First Nations community capacity and leadership needed



First Time having First Nations leadership of NATSIEHC



2022 RANZCO Aboriginal ownership and leadership critical to build equitable services



Vision 2030 launch, 2nd May 2023  
Deadly Vision Centre, Darwin, NT



FNEHA peak body incorporated 18th July 2023



First Nations meeting talking about importance or prevention and actions



NATSIEHC25 Community controlled for the first time



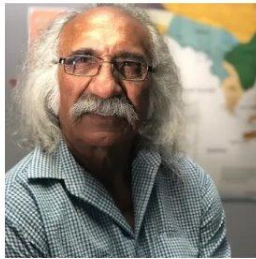
2025 Strong Eyes Strong Community Evaluation identified need for stronger Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership

# FNEHA: Australia's first principal voice and Peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye care

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Charity made up of First Nations experts in eye care
- Focused on the development of healthy and thriving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- Lead from deep knowledge and lived experience to influence and engage the collective obligation and reciprocity across the health community
- Build Our vision Our way.



Pat Anderson AO



Trevor Buzzacott OAM



Shaunt Tatipata



Telaine Cowdrey



A/Professor Kris Rallah-Baker



Nick Wilson



Sara Carrison



Dr Thomas Mylne



Lauren Carr

FNEHA Co Patrons and Board Directors



# Eye health equity is a priority for Mob

**Eye Diseases and Vision problems** are the **most common long term health conditions** reported by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience **3x's more vision impairment and blindness** than non-Indigenous Australians with over **>90% of vision loss is preventable** with timely intervention.

*“The rates of eye health inequity experienced by mob is unacceptable. We are working with mob and our communities to drive change now” Lose (Rose) Fonua, CEO, FNEHA*



Lose (Rose) Fonua, CEO, FNEHA at 2025 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health Conference, Whadjuk Noongar Country, May 2025



# Rates of Vision loss and blindness to increase by 2030 without intervention

There will be a gap in eye health and vision care services into 2030 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population estimates are projected to reach 1 million

This is consistent with international findings that according to projections **50% of the world's population will be short-sighted by 2050.**

The impacts are far reaching - unemployment, poor academic performance, mental ill health, social isolation, and increased risk of injury and illness.



V2030 Report launch, Larrakia  
Country May 2023, Senator the Hon  
Malarndirri McCarthy, Minister for  
Indigenous Australians

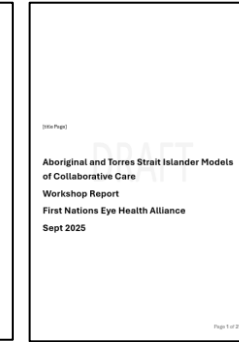
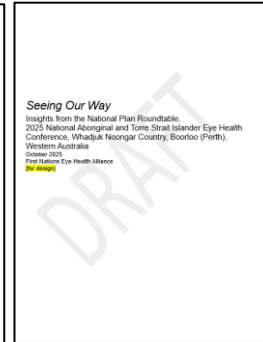
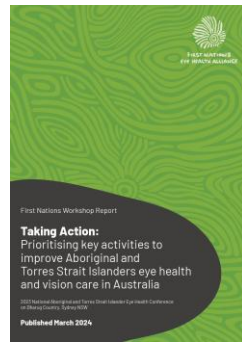
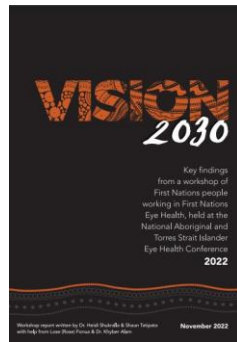
# Key Works in motion to address this

- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Conference
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye health plan
- Systems reform work: cultural safety, prevention
- Education and training: pathways
- Research: Kids Vision, Indigenous led models of care



First Nations Members, 2023 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health Conference, Dharug Country, Paramatta

## Key publications, research and reports



For more information go to our website [www.fneha.com.au](http://www.fneha.com.au)

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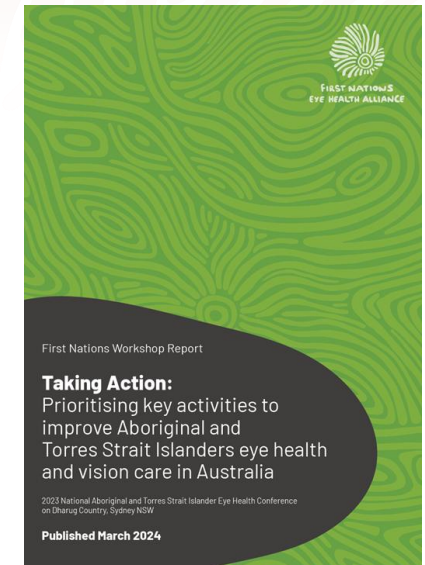
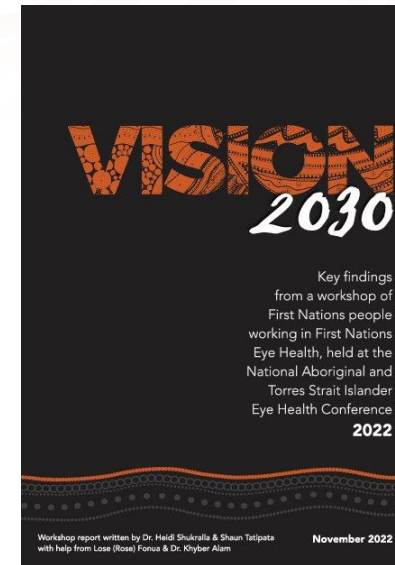


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# Mob consultation told us

- There is a lot of work to be done, and these consultations provided roadmap to support action
- Key priorities for action now
  - Workforce, scope of practice and capability
  - Education and training
  - Funding and resourcing



Scan the QR codes  
to view online

# A mob led vision and its challenges

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned and led initiatives work
- Self Determination is key and critical for integrating cultural knowledge and principles
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye health plan is important to strengthen eye health approaches

*“Every seat that’s held without delivering outcomes is a seat that could be driving real change.” - Shaun Tatipata, Chair, FNEHA*



2025 Close the Gap launch, Naarm



Scan here to  
download report



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[www.fneha.com.au](http://www.fneha.com.au)





# Immediate eye care sector priorities

1. Full commitment to implementation on the National Agreement by supporting and funding the support **self-determination** of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and their structures
2. Sustainable funding resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye health
3. Resourced First Nations led Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye health plan sector plan



First Nations Meeting, 2024 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health Conference, Nipaluna country, Lutruwita

NATSIEHC26

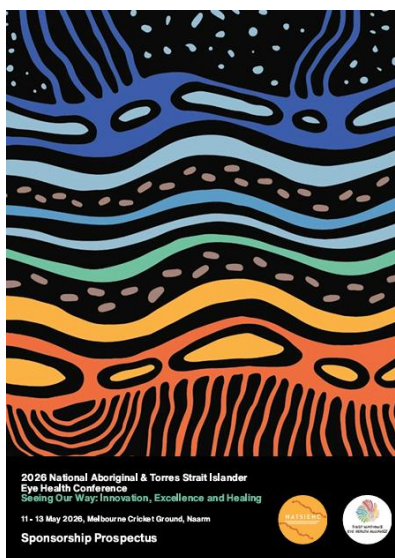
# SEEING OUR WAY

Innovation, Excellence and Healing

11 May - 13 May 2026

Naarm (Melbourne) at the MCG  
on lands of the Wurundjeri people

Go to [www.fnhea.com.au](http://www.fnhea.com.au) for more info



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## Registrations are open!

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Registration of the conference

[www.fnhea.com.au](http://www.fnhea.com.au)



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# WEBINAR SEEING OUR WAY

Insights from the National Plan Roundtable,  
2025 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health Conference,  
Whadjuk Noongar Country, Boorloo (Perth), Western Australia

*October 2025*



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Join us to gain insights from the National Plan Roundtable  
When: 13<sup>th</sup> of December [online webinar]  
Register interest: scan QR code here





**Join us...**



**2025 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
Eye Health Conference, Noongar Country**



# Thankyou!

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