## A passport to better health; eye care in the Western Murrumbidgee Local Health District



Moshegov, S. McCall. D, Legg. K, Kourt, G. Glenn, D. Painter, G.



## **Outreach Program:**

The 'Tackling Indigenous Smoking' (TIS) program by GAMS conducts outreach health screenings across various towns in the MLHD under the "Passport to Better Health" initiative. In 2024, screenings took place in ten towns, with 280 people screened—70% of whom were Indigenous, and 29% were smokers. The program screens for hypertension, weight, diabetes, nicotine dependence, alcohol and drug dependence, and social-emotional wellbeing.

Starting in 2025, eye disease screening will be added, including visual acuity tests, portable slit lamp examinations, and intraocular pressure measurements as needed.

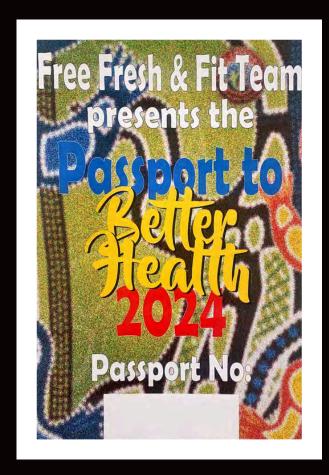
The program will also expand its reach throughout South-Western NSW.

Thanks to a recent donation of a portable retinal camera from the Turramurra and Griffith Rotary clubs, the outreach team can now include photographic diabetic retinopathy screenings. Aboriginal Healthcare Workers have been trained to capture retinal images for assessment by qualified personnel.

## **Lessons Learned:**

Training and equipment provision empower local Aboriginal Healthcare Workers to effectively screen for common conditions affecting Indigenous Australians.

Outreach efforts by these workers reduce barriers to access, enhancing early detection and participation in eye care. Collaboration with external eye care organizations and local optometrists has demonstrated the benefits of a coordinated referral system. Additionally, integrating ophthalmic screening into broader health programs like the "Passport to Better Health" ensures that eye health is a regular part of preventive care in Indigenous communities.



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