

New Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Eye Health Organisation to lead the way in ending avoidable blindness for First Nations communities

The First Nations Eye Health Alliance is pleased to announce that it is now an incorporated entity as of 18 July 2023. The recent incorporation of the First Nations Eye Health Alliance will see efforts to end avoidable vision loss and blindness strengthened.

The new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led eye health organisation was born out of key discussions at the 2022 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health Conference in Darwin, NT where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health professionals from across the country called for a dedicated body to lead the advancements needed to improve eye health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Key findings from these discussions have been captured in the Vision 2030 Report which can be found [here](#).

This request was reiterated again at the 2023 Conference, where over 80 First Nations representatives attended a workshop and confirmed the need for an incorporated body that could represent the views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health Professionals committed to improving eye health outcomes for their communities. More information can be found online [here](#).

Supporting the incorporated entity is the newly established leadership that includes strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patrons and board members with a long-standing history of working in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health. These members include:

- Pat Anderson AO is a Co-Patron of the First Nations Eye Health Alliance. Pat is an Alyawarre woman known nationally and internationally as an advocate for the rights and health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people including community development, policy formation and research ethics. Ms Anderson was Co-Chair of the Referendum Council, the Co-Chair of the Uluru Dialogue, and a key advocate for the YES vote for the Voice to parliament 2023 Australian Referendum.
- Trevor Buzzacott OAM is a Co-Patron of the First Nations Eye Health Alliance. Trevor is an Arabana man that worked closely with the late Professor Fred Hollows on the delivery of the National Trachoma program between 1976-1978. The program screened and treated over 100,000 people across Australia for eye disease including trachoma.
- A/Professor Kris Rallah-Baker is a Yuggera/Warrongo/Wiradjuri man and Australia's First and currently only Indigenous Ophthalmologist. Kris holds an Adjunct Associate Professorship with QUT, is an Honorary Associate Professor at the University of Melbourne, founding member and former President of the Australian Indigenous Doctors Association, former AMA Federal Councillor, Director on the Federal Board of the Royal Flying Doctors Service, technical advisor to the Fred Hollows Foundation, Chair of the Vision2020 Indigenous Committee, a Zeiss Key Opinion Leader, Director on the Board of the Nova Peris Foundation and Director/Owner of Sunshine Coast Ophthalmologists at Noosa and Nambour
- Shaun Tatipata is a Ngarrindjeri/Wuthathi man and Managing Director of the Deadly Vision Centre in Darwin, Board Director of IAHA NT Workforce Development Ltd and Vision 2020 Australia, and Chair of the First Nations Eye Health Alliance Board.
- Anne-Marie Banfield is a proud Kurna woman from South Australia, who has been living, working, and raising her family on Gunditjmara in the Southwest of Victoria for last 30 years. Anne-Marie has extensive experience in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye health and has worked as Eye and Ear coordinator and Aboriginal health practitioner. Anne-Marie is the founder of Kadadjiny an Aboriginal instructional and graphic design business specialising in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learning and education resources and material, currently lectures with The Australian College of Applied Professions, The University of Melbourne, and Latrobe University, sits on the

Australian College of Optometry RAP committee and consults and presents at conferences and webinars on Aboriginal health and education.

- Lauren Hutchinson is a Murrawarri woman and optometrist. Lauren was born and raised on Wiradjuri country in the central west of NSW. She graduated from her Bachelor of Vision Science/Master of Optometry from QUT in 2017, following which, she returned to the central west, now residing back on the beautiful lands of the Wiradjuri people once again. Lauren has worked as an optometrist both in private practice and within the community-controlled sector. Lauren's passions are in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, rural and remote and paediatric health and is committed to advocating for improving outcomes for her people in these spaces. In her spare time, you can find Lauren spending time with her beautiful nieces and nephews, on a hockey field or fishing on the Galari (Lachlan River).

The First Nations Eye Health Alliance will be spearheaded by Lose (Rose) Fonua who was recently appointed interim CEO to lead the organisation's establishment phase. Lose brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the role from working in the health sector in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health programs, research, capability, and strategy at a local, statewide, and national level. Lose's most recent appointment is as the Associate Director of the Indigenous Eye Health Unit and Academic Specialist working in policy and practice in systems reform.

Lose has a passion for mob to be healthy and thriving in every part of their lives and expressed her enthusiasm to bringing this lens to the work as the inaugural CEO of The First Nations Eye Health Alliance. *"The formation of the First Nations Eye Health Alliance is a significant step in advancing outcomes for eye health in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. I am honoured to be given this opportunity to work with the remarkable First Nations Eye Health Board and membership. Together we will see our communities lead the way to eliminating preventable vision loss and blindness for our mob, so our children and our families can be healthy and flourish in all they do."*

Shaun Tatipata, Chairperson of The First Nations Eye Health Alliance Board remarked:

"The emergence of the First Nations Eye Health Alliance is an exciting and critical next step for the eye and vision care sector. In a referendum year where Australia is acknowledging the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices to be involved in and consulted on matters that are important to them, we are privileged to represent the views of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander membership and their communities in eye health."

We are thankful to have Lose working with us as our interim Chief Executive Officer to help build our communities visions and purposes. We acknowledge the passion and commitment Lose (Rose) has shown to date to help bring us this far and we are excited about how we will work together to see our communities healthy and empowered moving forward'.

For media inquiries or further information please contact:

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About

The First Nations Eye Health Alliance was established to stop preventable vision loss and blindness in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities. Comprised of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members working at a local, state, and national level, the collective informs and supports the development of equitable changes to eye health care for First Nations Communities through the strategic and operational activities undertaken by the First Nations Eye Health Alliance board and secretariat.

For more information, please visit www.fneha.com.au