



## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

Wednesday, November 12, 2014

### **Lions Eye Institute forging new partnerships to strengthen Indigenous eye health.**

The Lions Eye Institute (LEI) is forging new partnerships with Diabetes WA and Aboriginal Medical Services in Perth and country WA to drive improvements in Indigenous eye health.

The LEI's Lions Outback Vision (LOV) group received a \$221,000 Commonwealth Government grant to purchase three ocular coherence tomography (OCT) scanners to assist in the screening of diabetic patients.

The scanners have been installed at three Aboriginal Medical Services - Derbarl Yerrigan in East Perth, Port Hedland and Kalgoorlie – and the Outback Vision team has trained local staff to use them.

LOV Director Associate Professor Angus Turner said OCTs captured retinal images that were then transferred to his team in Perth for scrutiny and grading.

“LOV has been treating patients at Derbarl Yerrigan’s East Perth service for two years,” he said.

“The donation of the OCT scanner turns Derbarl into a one-stop-shop for access to optometry, ophthalmology and diabetic retinopathy screening.”

LOV has also teamed up with Diabetes WA to offer diabetic patients extra opportunities to access information and expertise to assist in management of the disease.

Diabetes is a chronic disease affecting 1.8 million Australians, with about 275 adults

developing diabetes every day.

“Indigenous Australians are 14 times more likely to have diabetes-related blindness than non-Indigenous Australians,” Associate Professor Turner said.

“The National Indigenous Eye Health Survey found that 37.4 per cent of Indigenous adults reported having diabetes but with timely diagnosis and treatment, up to 98 per cent of severe vision loss can be prevented.”

Diabetes WA will engage with patients waiting to see an eye specialist at Derbarl Yerrigan to talk about holistic diabetic management.

Certified Diabetes Educators will provide targeted information to patients about foot care, diet, nutrition, exercise and more to help minimise the impact of the disease.

Associate Professor said this was an important collaboration between LOV and Diabetes WA that focused on holistic health outcomes.

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