

MEDIA RELEASE



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Cataract Surgery Blitz in South West Queensland

Sixty (60) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from South-West Queensland will have sight-saving cataract surgery over three days (Friday 5 February, Monday 8 February and Friday 4 March) when a team of dedicated health providers and health organisations arrive in Roma to coordinate this logistically challenging endeavour.

Dedicated funding has been provided from the Commonwealth Department of Health to CheckUP, a not-for-profit health organisation based in Brisbane, to make this surgery possible. CheckUP is working in close partnership with the Indigenous Diabetes Eyes and Screening (IDEAS) Van and many local health organisations from South-West Queensland on this important initiative.

CheckUP CEO, Ann Maree Liddy is pleased that CheckUP was able to secure this additional funding from the Commonwealth and is delighted that so many organisations are working collaboratively to make the cataract surgery happen. “This enormous undertaking has involved considerable planning and the cooperation and goodwill of many organisations from South-West Queensland and Brisbane”.

“The cataract surgery will make a huge difference to the lives of 60 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in South-West Queensland. We know that cataracts are the leading cause of blindness in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and accessing this surgery is normally very difficult for people living in the more remote areas of Queensland. This surgery is potentially life changing as it will allow people to continue to live independently in their communities.”

Lyndall De Marco, CEO of the IDEAS Van, which travels to rural and remote communities in Queensland in an effort to reduce blindness and visual impairment amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders with diabetes, is also delighted that their service is playing such a vital role in coordinating the surgery.

“It’s been a tremendous team effort from everyone involved. We’d particularly like to acknowledge the Ophthalmologists, Dr Rowan Porter for preparing the patients for surgery and Dr Steven Rodwell, the surgeon.

“Thanks also to Dr Tom Gibson, the Executive Director of Medical Services and the Executive at South West Hospital and Health Service, who made it possible to increase the number of patients having cataract surgery at the Roma Hospital from 40 to 60.”

“We’d also like to acknowledge the Royal Flying Doctor Service and many Aboriginal Medical Services - Charleville and Western Areas Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Community Health; Goondir Health Services in Dalby and St George; Cherbourg Regional Aboriginal and Islander Community Controlled Health Service; and Cunnamulla Primary Health Care Centre - who are collecting patients from 13 districts, transporting them to Roma and caring for them during the six days of procedures. Local businesses from Roma and nearby regional centres have also kindly provided their support to this wonderful initiative.”

The patients, the medical team and support staff will arrive in Roma this Thursday night (4 February) and again on Sunday night (7 February) for a social gathering before the first two rounds of surgery, which will provide an opportunity for the patients to meet with the medical staff and ask any questions about their cataract surgery in a relaxed, supportive environment.

For media enquiries, please contact:

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