

# MEDIA RELEASE



**13 October 2016**

## **Cataract Surgery Blitz in Mount Isa**

Twenty-six (26) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from the Lower Gulf will have sight-saving cataract surgery over three days next week (18-20 October) when a team of health providers and local health organisations will work together to coordinate this logistically challenging endeavour. A second round of cataract surgery will be delivered during the week of the 21 November for twenty-eight (28) local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients from Mount Isa and surrounds.

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 cataract surgery possible. CheckUP is working in close partnership with the North West Hospital and Health Service (NWHHS), with support from Gidgee Healing, 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 North West Queensland".

"The cataract surgery will make a huge difference to the lives of over 50 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the Lower Gulf region and the Mount Isa district. 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."

The Chief Executive for the NWHHS, Lisa Davies Jones, said the opportunity was a real boost for cataract patients in the Lower Gulf.

"We are delighted to be able to host this life-changing event for so many of our patients, and we're very grateful to CheckUP for brokering and organising this surgery blitz. We're also very grateful to the Commonwealth for funding this extraordinary initiative," Ms Davies Jones said.

Dallas Leon, CEO of Gidgee Healing, is also pleased that this initiative is taking place in Mount Isa over the next two months.

“It’s great to see a range of organisations working together to provide this important service. Thanks to this initiative, over 50 Aboriginal people living in the North West and Lower Gulf regions will now have increased access to potentially life-changing surgery – that is a great outcome for all involved.”

The patients, the medical team and support staff involved in the first round of surgery will arrive in Mount Isa this Sunday (16 October) for a social gathering before the 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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