

MEDIA RELEASE

Optometrists warn to protect eyes during rare, upcoming solar eclipse in Ningaloo, WA

13 April 2022: Optometry Australia is reminding the public to take precautions to protect their eyesight during the upcoming solar eclipse on Thursday 20 April in Ningaloo, Western Australia.

While a solar eclipse is a rare and spectacular event, viewing it directly can be extremely dangerous, if not done properly.

Luke Arundel, optometrist and Chief Clinical Officer at Optometry Australia said that “looking at the sun, even during a solar eclipse, can cause serious and even permanent damage to the eyes.

“While it generates natural curiosity to have such a rare phenomenon coming up in WA next week, as well as in other locations around Australia over the next 15 years, that makes it even more important for people to understand the potential dangers that can come from looking directly at the sun.

“It is especially important for children to be protected, as they are likely to be less aware of the dangers and their young eyes are particularly vulnerable to damage,” Mr Arundel added.

The Astronomical Society of Australia has created a comprehensive guide on how to view the eclipse in a safe way. The guide states that the *only* safe way to look directly at the uneclipsed, partially eclipsed or annularly eclipsed sun is through special-purpose solar filters, such as ‘eclipse glasses’ or handheld solar viewers. It adds that homemade filters or ordinary sunglasses, even very dark ones, are not safe for looking at the sun; they transmit thousands of times too much sunlight.

“We urge anyone interested in this eclipse to familiarise themselves with the guide created by the ASA, and to check their list of manufacturers of solar viewers verified to be compliant with the transmission requirements of the ISO 12312-2 international safety standard,” Mr Arundel concluded.

A solar eclipse occurs when the moon passes between the sun and the Earth, casting a shadow on the Earth’s surface. During a solar eclipse, the moon appears to cover the sun partially or completely, creating a stunning visual display. The upcoming solar eclipse in Ningaloo will be a partial eclipse, where the moon will cover a portion of the sun.

Optometry Australia recommends that people who experience any eye discomfort, irritation, or vision problems to seek immediate attention from their local optometrist.

More information can be found at <https://eclipse.asa.astronomy.org.au/how-to-view/>

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About Optometry Australia

Optometry Australia is the peak professional body for optometrists. Representing 85% of registered Australian optometrists, Optometry Australia's focus is to lead and advance the profession of optometry by putting eye-health front and centre of Australian health care.