

MEDIA RELEASE

Fewer non-urgent eye health presentations in emergency as eye health messages start to resonate

Melbourne February 5, 2018. A review of emergency department presentations across Australia in 2016-17¹ reveals that almost 120,000 people presented for eye conditions,² of which just over 19,640 were considered non-urgent.

While Optometry Australia, the peak professional body for optometrists, is concerned with the amount of people presenting to emergency departments for eye health issues, it is encouraged by a noticeable 25% drop in the number presenting with non-urgent conditions over the past three years.

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's annual *Emergency department care report*, in 2015-16ⁱ, emergency departments across Australia were presented with just over 25,200 non-urgent eye health issues and in 2014-15ⁱⁱ, with 26,000.

Between 2015-16 and 2016-17, emergency departments also saw 1.5% less presentations for eye related conditions across all diagnostic block and triage categories³.

Optometry Australia's CEO Lyn Brodie said that, "We anticipate that this drop in non-urgent presentations could relate to people's better understanding of the important role of optometrists in managing Australian's eye health and that more people are seeking opinions of optometrists for acute eye conditions rather than attend emergency departments".

In 2016-17, there were 8.89 million eye-related Medicare consultations, an increase of almost 7.7% over the three years since 2014-15.

"It is clear that our messages are starting to resonate with Australians – regular eye examinations can help to identify emerging, and potentially vision-threatening eye health issues such as glaucoma and macular degeneration, as well as highlighting other diseases such as high blood pressure, propensity for stroke, diabetes and some cancers.

"Eye examinations are therefore an important tool for determining your overall health and living well.

"Our organisation has worked hard to raise the profile of optometry through our *Good vision for life* campaign and it appears that our messages are starting to have a positive impact," Ms Brodie said.

For further information about eye health, please visit www.goodvisionforlife.com.au.

¹ Refers to "Illness of the eye" Australian Government, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Emergency department care 2016-17, Australian hospital statistics*.

² Illness of the eyes is considered a "major diagnostic block" which is a classification that groups emergency department presentations based on diagnosis information. Source: Australian Government, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

³ Includes resuscitation, emergency, urgent, semi-urgent, non-urgent

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Optometry Australia is the peak professional body for optometrists. Representing eight out of every 10 Australian-based 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.

ⁱ <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/hospitals/emergency-department-care-ahs-2015-16/contents/table-of-contents>

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