



Community Eye Health Champion resources

An introduction to the initiative, optometry in your community and how you can help

What is the Visiting Optometrists Scheme and how are the optometry services funded?

The Visiting Optometrists Scheme (VOS) is a national initiative funded by the Australian Government. Its purpose is to increase access to optometry services for communities in remote, regional and rural Australia which do not have access to a local optometrist, or whose local optometrist is unable to provide the services appropriate to the community's specific eye health or cultural needs.

In South Australia, VOS is administered and managed by the Rural Doctors Workforce Agency (RDWA) who deliver outreach programmes that provide a range of health professionals including medical specialists and allied health and nursing professionals. Their aim is to provide the most appropriate health workforce where and when it is most needed across remote and rural South Australia.

The RDWA works closely with optometrists to provide VOS clinics. The timing and location of the clinics is based on identified local need and scheduled well in advance. The participating optometrists who travel to provide eye care bulk-bill their professional services to Medicare and receive funding support from RDWA for travel, accommodation and other associated expenses through VOS. The participating optometrists are committed to enhancing the quality of life for people living in rural and remote areas.

Getting the most from the optometry visit

A regular check by the optometrist is important for all members of your community, regardless of their age and general health. 90% of blindness is avoidable or treatable if it is diagnosed in time. Eye disease tends to develop gradually and problems are identified too late. There are two key things you can do to make a difference:

1. Learn more about eye health and who in your community is most at risk

The resource kit has been designed to help you in your role as eye health champion and includes:

- > A short video which explains how the optometrist can help all members of your community
- > A series of 15-minute presentations which the optometrist can present to your clinic team and others in your community on “Diabetes and Eye Health”, “Looking after Ageing eyes”, “Children’s vision” and “Dry Eye”. Just ask your visiting optometrist next time they’re in town.
- > Handouts – these have been designed for your reference after the presentation by the optometrist, and may be useful to share with your community.

2. Tell people when the optometrist is coming to town

If you have watched the video, you know that a check-up by the optometrist is important for everyone in your community. You can help by letting people know when the optometrist is next visiting and to book an appointment. We have included some resources to help you:

- > A range of posters to put up around your community where everyone will see them. Consider displaying them in your clinic, the pharmacy, the service station, the Deli, the school & kindy, the community centre or Aged Care Home, plus anywhere else that you know will work.

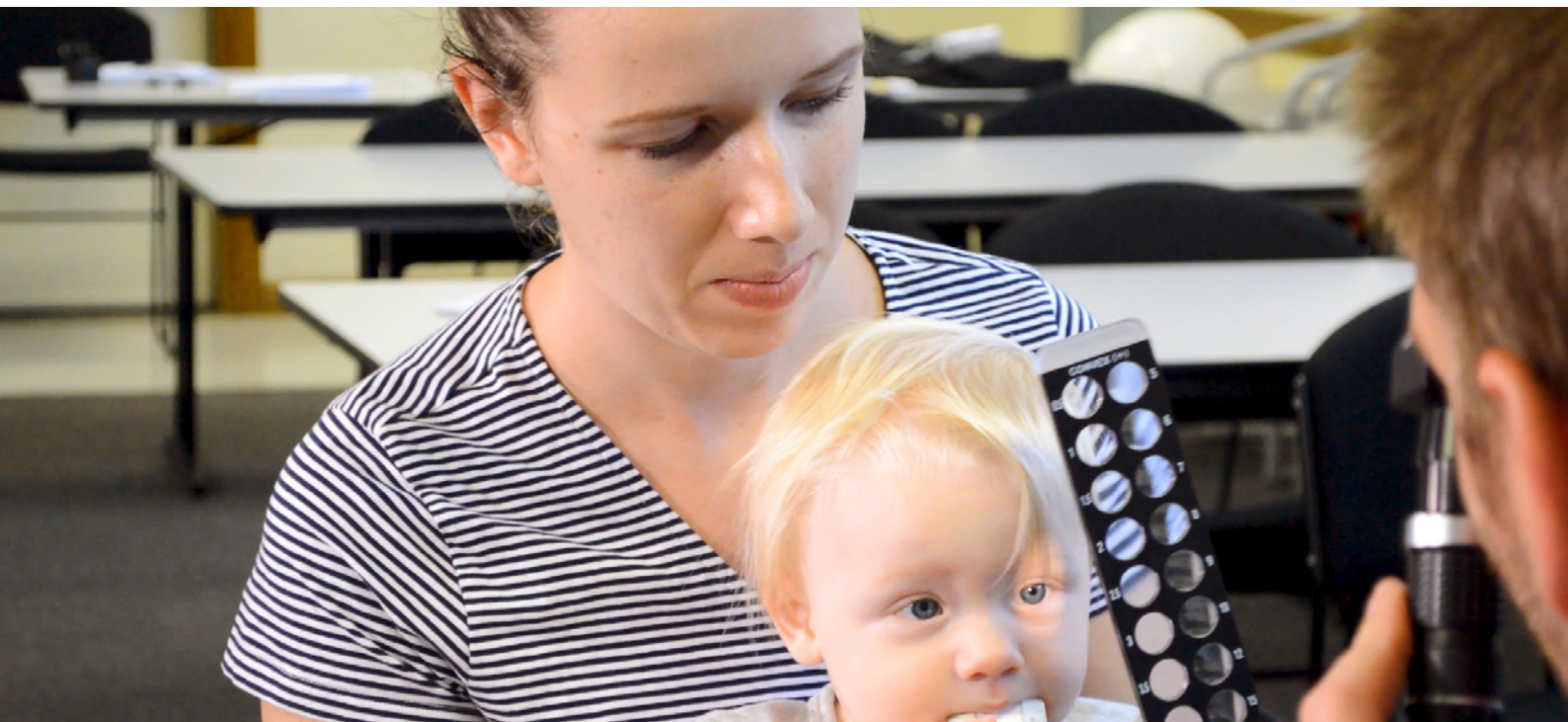
Each poster includes a space to write the date and place of the clinic and how to book an appointment. Pick the ones that fit for your community

Additional resources for your GP

Some excellent on-line resources for GPs to start with are:

- > the Brien Holden Vision Institute’s introduction to what a retinal camera can do
<https://www.brienholdenvision.org/provision-of-eye-health-equipment-and-training.html>
- > our *Good vision for life* consumer vision portal at www.goodvisionforlife.com.au.

The visiting optometrist will be able to provide mentoring and further hints and tips when they visit.



Looking for more information?

Head to www.goodvisionforlife.com.au