**Presentation title:**

Enhancing the role of primary health care in Indigenous eye care

**Abstract** (max. 300 words):

Mandatory eye examinations have been included in MBS Adult and Older Person’s health assessments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients since 2013. New MBS items for eye care in primary care were also introduced in 2016 to support diabetic retinal screening in general practice. This presentation will suggest approaches for eye examinations by GPs within this health assessment and diabetes screening context and explore routine eye care pathways.

Indigenous Australians are affected by three times more blindness than other Australians and the most common causes of vision loss are refractive error, cataract and diabetic retinopathy. Only 23% of Aboriginal people attend for health assesments and eye examination rates are 25% less than mainstream. Primary care services have a crucial role in providing care and treatment for common eye conditions and identifying and initiating the referral of patients to access treatment for vision problems. The inclusion of simple eye examinations in routine health assessments can improve identification of patients requiring care and the initiation of appropriate referral to specialist eye care, including for diabetic eye care.

A simple history and examination protocol is suggested which will allow the detection of vision problems and the initiation of referral to optometry or ophthalmology services for additional treatment such as prescribing glasses and cataract surgery. Patients with diabetes require annual retinal examination and options for this surveillance include GP managed non-mydiratic retinal photography.

All Indigenous Australians are eligible for a primary care eye check each year and no Indigenous Australian with diabetes should be allowed to go more than 12 months without an eye examination. A number of resources are available to support GPs provide and co-ordinate Indigenous eye care and this provides the basis to reduce unnecessary vision loss from refractive error, cataract and diabetes and help close the gap for vision.