



Jillian Skinner MP

Minister for Health

Minister for Medical Research

MEDIA RELEASE

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DUBBO EYE CLINIC A FIRST

Some of the state's most disadvantaged residents will now have greater access to specialist eye care when a new service opens in Dubbo today.

Health Minister Jillian Skinner and Dubbo MP Troy Grant have congratulated the Indigenous and Remote Eye Health Service (IRIS), which in conjunction with the NSW Health, will coordinate the public ophthalmology clinic to improve access to eye health services and reduce lengthy public waiting lists for ophthalmological surgery.

"This new service is a leap forward in providing access to eye health services for Aboriginal people in the Dubbo and surrounding regions," Mrs Skinner said.

"NSW Health has partnered with IRIS to purchase \$250,000 worth of specialised ophthalmological equipment for the new clinic in Dubbo.

"Once the \$79.8 million redevelopment of Dubbo Hospital is complete, the eye clinic will complement the raft of services available to the local community."

Mr Grant welcomed the news saying local residents will now have access to specialist services closer to home.

"This new public clinic will address that need with improved access to consulting services, surgery and associated treatments and services.

"This is great news for Dubbo and surrounding communities and I acknowledge the dedicated work of IRIS and NSW Health to ensure the delivery of this service to local patients."

IRIS Taskforce chairman ophthalmologist Dr Mark Loane AM said the clinic pioneered new relationships in IRIS operations.

"IRIS is a joint national initiative of the Australian Society of Ophthalmologists and the Federal Government and funded by the Federal Department of Health and Ageing," Dr Loane said.

"Dubbo presented as a region with particular need with the largest concentration of indigenous people in NSW. The Aboriginal population in this region also has a greater exposure to risk factors causing eye diseases than the general population.

“Despite this, indigenous patients have been underrepresented in surgery for preventable and treatable eye-health conditions, including cataract surgery.”

Dr Loane paid tribute to the support IRIS had received in establishing the Dubbo clinic.

“IRIS cannot operate in isolation and this project would not have been possible without the enthusiasm and support of the NSW Ministry of Health, the Public Ophthalmology Eye Clinic, The Rural Doctors Network, the Dubbo Health Service and the Western NSW Local Health District,” Mr Loane said.

IRIS funding is provided to the ASO by the Federal Government through the Department of Health and Ageing, Medical Specialist Outreach Assistance Program – Eye Health Teams for Rural Australia. Equipment is funded by the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health.