



Australian Society of Ophthalmologists

# MEDIA RELEASE

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Australian Society of Ophthalmologists Incorporated ABN 29 454 001 424

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## **GOVT DESERVES TICK OF APPROVAL FOR SUPPORTING HEALTHCARE DELIVERY THAT BREAKS DOWN BARRIERS**

The Australian Society of Ophthalmologists (ASO) says the Federal Government's new incentives for doctors and healthcare workers involved in delivering medical consultations via videolink is a health initiative for which it should be commended.

The new 50 per cent bonuses and incentive payments to be paid to medical specialists, general practitioners, nurses, including allied and aboriginal health workers, who provide videolink consultations to patients in remote locations is part of the Federal Labor Government's \$620 million telehealth initiative. "This represents progressive healthcare planning," ASO President Dr Brad Horsburgh said.

"It is these kinds of initiatives that will help break down the barriers of access that have impacted on so many Australians living in regional and remote areas for so long," he said.

"This shows the Government is willing to embrace the benefits of technology and support medical professionals in delivering health care to the highest of standards."

The movement towards introducing a greater degree of telehealth into general healthcare delivery is something that is central to the fledgling 'Indigenous and Remote Eye Health Service' (IRIS), a joint initiative between the Australian Society of Ophthalmologists (ASO) and the Federal Government. This Government initiative will give IRIS a great boost in striving to achieve its goals.

The vision for IRIS is to create a borderless Australia, where co-ordination and delivery of eye health services is so sophisticated even the most remote community in the country will have access to exceptional eye health services.

"IRIS seeks to improve eye health services in rural and remote parts of Australia by taking a co-ordinated and whole-of-care approach to their development and delivery," IRIS Chair Dr Mark Loane explained. Adding to the connectivity of the specialist and their patients through telehealth consultation will further enhance the visits eye specialists make to regional, remote, and indigenous areas across the country on a regular basis.

The first official IRIS project, a cataract and chronic eye disease theatre at Nickol Bay Hospital in Karratha will be launched on Monday 13 June. Senior representatives from Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) and the Office of Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Health (OATSIH) will be attending the launch.

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