Eye Care Services in Rural Victoria

Victorian Eyecare Service (VES)

The Victorian Eyecare Service (VES) provides optometry care at low cost for persons who hold a pensioner concession card or health care card and live in rural Victoria. The VES is available in throughout rural Victoria through a large network participating optometrists and ophthalmologists. The primary care consultation fee is normally bulk billed and patients make a fixed contribution to the cost of glasses or contact lenses. The balance of the cost is subsidised by a State Government grant. The Victorian Eyecare Service (VES) is funded by the Government of Victoria and administered by the Australian College of Optometry.

Who is eligible?
Permanent residents of Victoria who:

- hold a Pensioner Concession Card in their own name, and their dependents under the age of eighteen years or
- have held a Health Care Card in their own name for at least six months continuously, and their dependants under the age of eighteen years and
- hold a Victorian pension card with the permanent residential address in country Victoria. A list of ineligible postcodes is available.

Aboriginal Eye examinations and eye health

Vision loss from diabetes, cataract and refractive error (the need for glasses) is common in Aboriginal communities in Victoria and 94% of vision loss is unnecessary as it is preventable or treatable. Regular eye examinations, early detection and treatment of eye problems helps prevent vision loss. An eye examination with an optometrist generally takes about 40 minutes and allows investigation of all aspects of how your eyes are functioning. Your eyes will be tested for eye diseases such as cataract, diabetic eye disease, macular degeneration, glaucoma, dry eye, binocular vision problems (how the two eyes work together) and your glasses prescription. Drops to dilate the pupil are usually used (especially if you have diabetes) to allow the optometrist to check the health of the retina, macula and optic nerve at the back of the eye. If cataract surgery or laser treatment is needed, the optometrist will arrange a referral to an eye specialist (ophthalmologist) in a public hospital eye clinic or you may choose to see a private specialist.

Children’s eye examinations will help to find any eye problems that affect your child’s ability to see clearly and comfortably for near vision and long distance vision.
Victorian Aboriginal Spectacle Subsidy Scheme (VASSS)

Eligibility
Any person who identifies as part of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community is welcome to attend any of the ACO services and can access the Victorian Eyecare Subsidy. There is no requirement to hold a Pensioner Concession Card or Health Care Card.

The Victorian Aboriginal Spectacle Subsidy Scheme (VASSS) provides subsidised visual aids (spectacles/glasses) to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander living in Victoria (Vic).

VASSS is a Closing the Health Gap initiative funded by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services as part of Koolin Balit - the Vic Government strategic directions for Aboriginal Health, and is supported by the Vic Eyecare Service. It is administered by the Australian College of Optometry, in partnership with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations and a network of optometrists in regional Victoria.

It allows patients to access a specifically designed pair of frames along with the prescribed lens for a contribution of $10. Unfortunately transitions lenses and spare pairs are not available under the $10 scheme but are available at extra cost (ask your optometrist for details).