

# Indigenous Australia Program

# DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS

## REVIEW OF THE REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION PROJECT OFFICER ROLE :

The Regional Implementation Project Officer (RIPO) position aims to work across, and in close collaboration with, Central Australian and Barkly Integrated Eye Health Strategy (CABIEHS) members and primary, secondary and tertiary eye health service providers to:

1. support the work of CABIEHS and its working groups
2. support the coordination and communication of eye health and vision care in Central Australia and Barkly
3. facilitate a consistent and collaborative approach to eye care across these regions.

*Sironis Health* was commissioned by The Fred Hollows Foundation to review the effectiveness of the RIPO position, analyse the impact of the position on the achievement of CABIEHS work plans and describe lessons which may inform The Foundation's design of coordination projects in other areas. This bulletin summarises the findings from the review which was finalised in April 2018.

### Key achievements

- There is overwhelming backing for the position to continue supporting CABIEHS. A locally based position was seen as essential to building relationships, trust and understanding of local eye health delivery, client and organisational issues.
- Stakeholders were positive about the RIPO's efforts to facilitate communication, relationships, trust and willingness to share and discuss data.
- The RIPO assisted the implementation of CABIEHS work plans, the development of working protocols and, in conjunction with the CABIEHS Data and Information Systems working group, developed the Barkly and Central Australia eye health data series.

*Alice Springs where RIPO is based.*



## Background

CABIEHS was formally established in 2010 as a regional partnership and governance arrangement to facilitate a shared responsibility for the delivery of eye health and vision care services and for the advancement of an effective eye health system for the Central Australia and Barkly regions. CABIEHS' shared vision is that: *All people in Central Australia and Barkly regions have access to timely and appropriate eye health and vision care services.*

CABIEHS member organisations are the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory, Anyinginyi Health Aboriginal Corporation, Brien Holden Vision Institute, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Aboriginal Corporation, Indigenous Eye Health (the University of Melbourne), Northern Territory Department of Health, Northern Territory Primary Health Network, The Fred Hollows Foundation, and as an observer, the Australian Government Department of Health.

In 2014 CABIEHS carried out an internal review that prioritised the recruitment of a RIPO. This local support position commenced in July 2016.

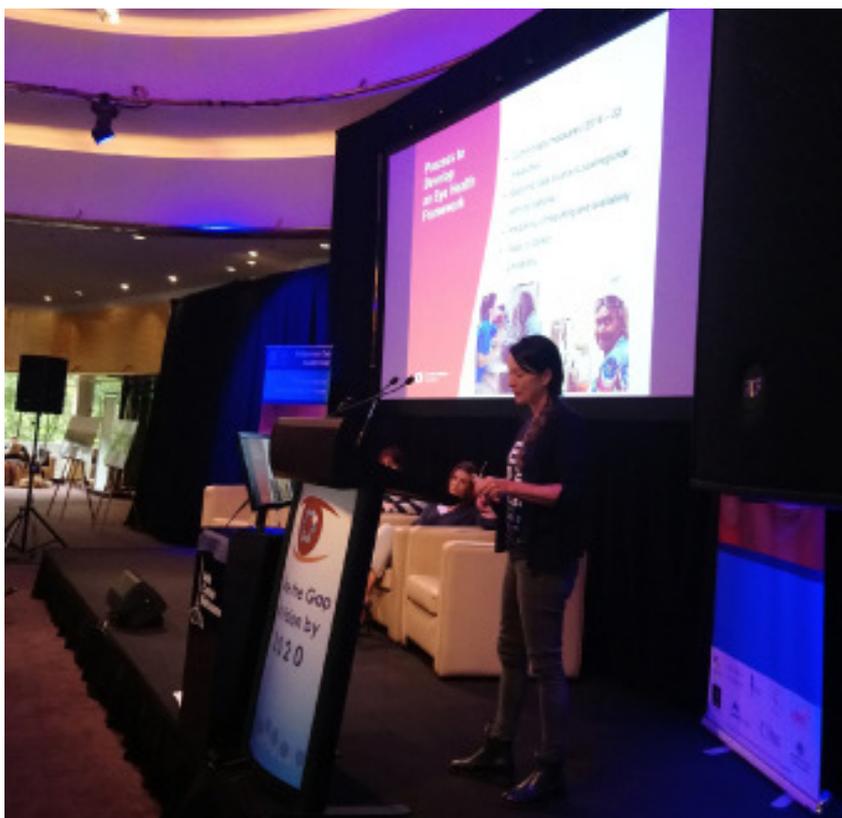
The Australian Department of Health provided funds to The Foundation for the position from its commencement in July 2016 to June 2017. The Foundation has covered the full costs of the position since that time.

## Reflections

None of the 10 stakeholders suggested dropping any of the current RIPO activities, including the position's recently assumed CABIEHS secretariat functions. There was also support for the position to:

- encourage CABIEHS to move to a more action and results oriented mode;
- facilitate greater recognition of the importance of all primary, secondary and tertiary stakeholders, as well as CABIEHS members, to achieving CABIEHS' vision.

The position's advice to CABIEHS could be broadened to incorporate consideration of qualitative as well as quantitative information, particularly in relation to barriers and challenges to the development of seamless client pathways in Central Australia and Barkly. Greater understanding of the issues confronting primary health providers, without designated eye services, was considered necessary. Changes were recommended to reinforce the RIPO position as a resource to assist CABIEHS, with the position's work being directed and supported by CABIEHS.



**“THERE IS A NEED FOR A RESOURCE TO BE AVAILABLE TO THE REGION TO REFLECT BACK TO STAKEHOLDERS AS TO HOW THEY ARE PERFORMING AGAINST REASONABLE (AND NOT LOWEST COMMON DENOMINATOR) STANDARDS.... THERE IS A NEED TO HOLD A MIRROR TO MEMBERS TO REFLECT ON PERFORMANCE....”**

*Key Stakeholder*

*The RIPO presents at IEH Close the Gap for Vision by 2020: Striving Together - National Conference 2018 on “The CABIEHS Regional Data Story: Illustrating the Process and Outcomes of Regional Data Collection”*

## Suggestions for the future

1. The RIPO position continues, recognising its valued support to CABIEHS' eye health improvement efforts.
2. That sustainable funding be sought for the position. In the absence of an alternate funding source, The Fred Hollows Foundation continue to fund the position.
3. That every effort is taken to reinforce the RIPO's responsibility and ability to advance the strategic priorities determined by CABIEHS, including by:
  - Recognising, in the position's duty statement, CABIEHS as the body responsible for setting the work priorities of the RIPO.
  - Better aligning the position's job description to its current activities and to the recommendations of this review.
  - Continuing to explore alternate local auspicing arrangements for the position, preferably by an Aboriginal controlled organisation.
  - To deliver monthly, one on one direct supervision of the position by a CABIEHS representative.
  - Developing a skills development plan, with an associated budget, for the position's occupant.
4. That the position's ability to provide effective support and advice to assist CABIEHS to decide its strategic priorities and work plans be enhanced by:
  - Incorporating into the position's duty statement, a responsibility to build a qualitative and quantitative picture of the barriers and challenges to seamless Central Australian and Barkly client eye health pathways.
  - Providing adequate resources to allow direct, but targeted, consultations with local stakeholders involved in offering seamless Central Australian and Barkly eye health pathways, including those without designated eye health delivery funding such as primary health clinics.
  - Incorporating into the position's duty statement, a responsibility to work with CABIEHS to optimise data and definitional comparability with national measures in order to strengthen CABIEHS' improvement and resource advocacy evidence.

## Specifically for The Fred Hollows Foundation

The RIPO Review notes and reinforces the Indigenous Australia Program's systems-level approach for continuous quality improvement (CQI) in eye care systems. Its components include:

- Patient journey as the operational base for improvement
- Regional stakeholder networks from across the eye care continuum
- CQI using a range of locally appropriate tools and methods.

Specific suggestions for The Foundation include:

- Promoting its CQI and funding strategies to enhance stakeholder understanding of how The Foundation aims to advance eye health.
- Adopting the role of interested, but independent, critical friend to CABIEHS.
- Continuing to support and/or advocate for regional eye health coordination positions in targeted high need regions.

**“THERE IS A NEED FOR PROMOTION OF THE JOINT OR COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL PARTNERS... ”**

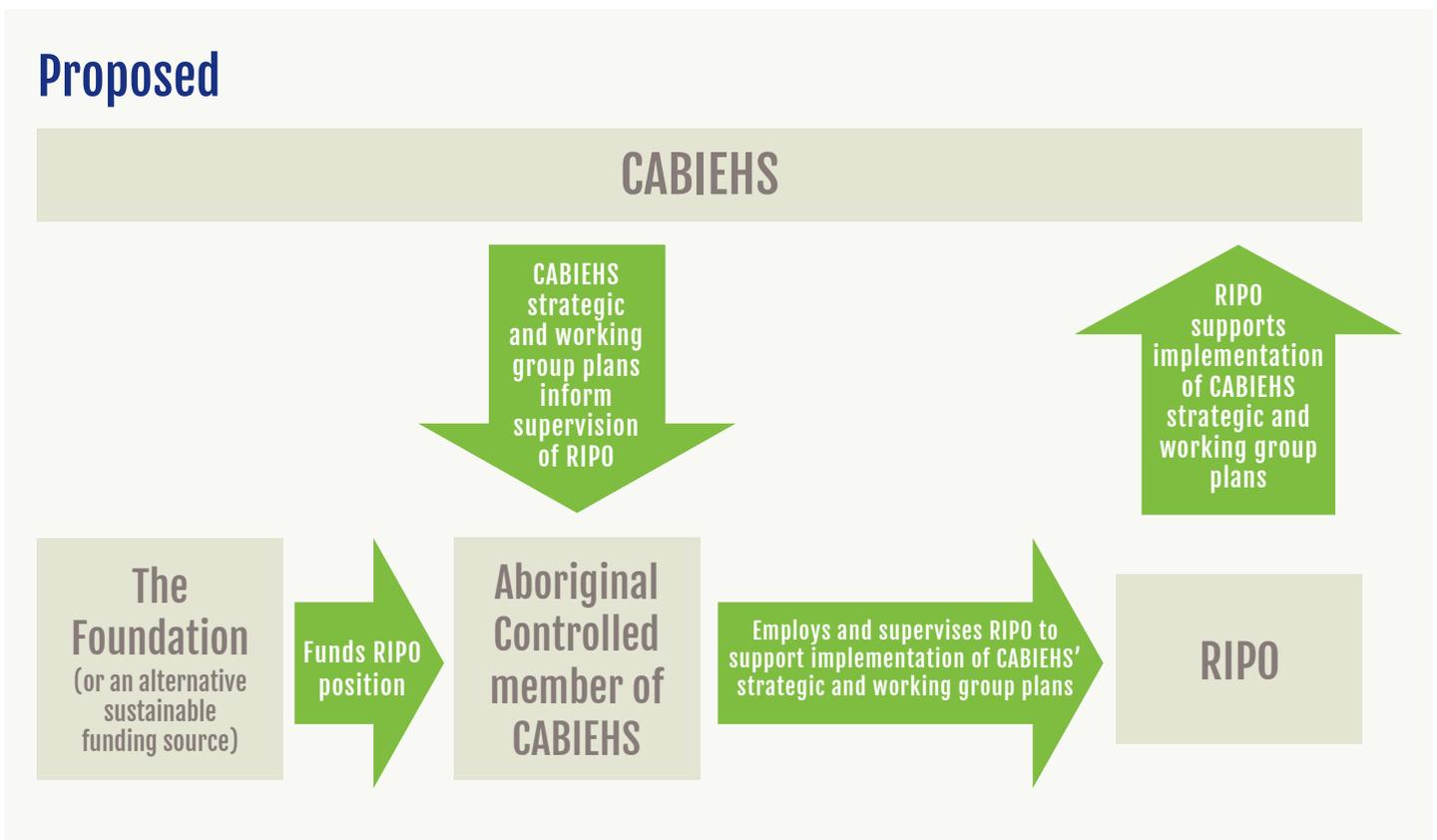
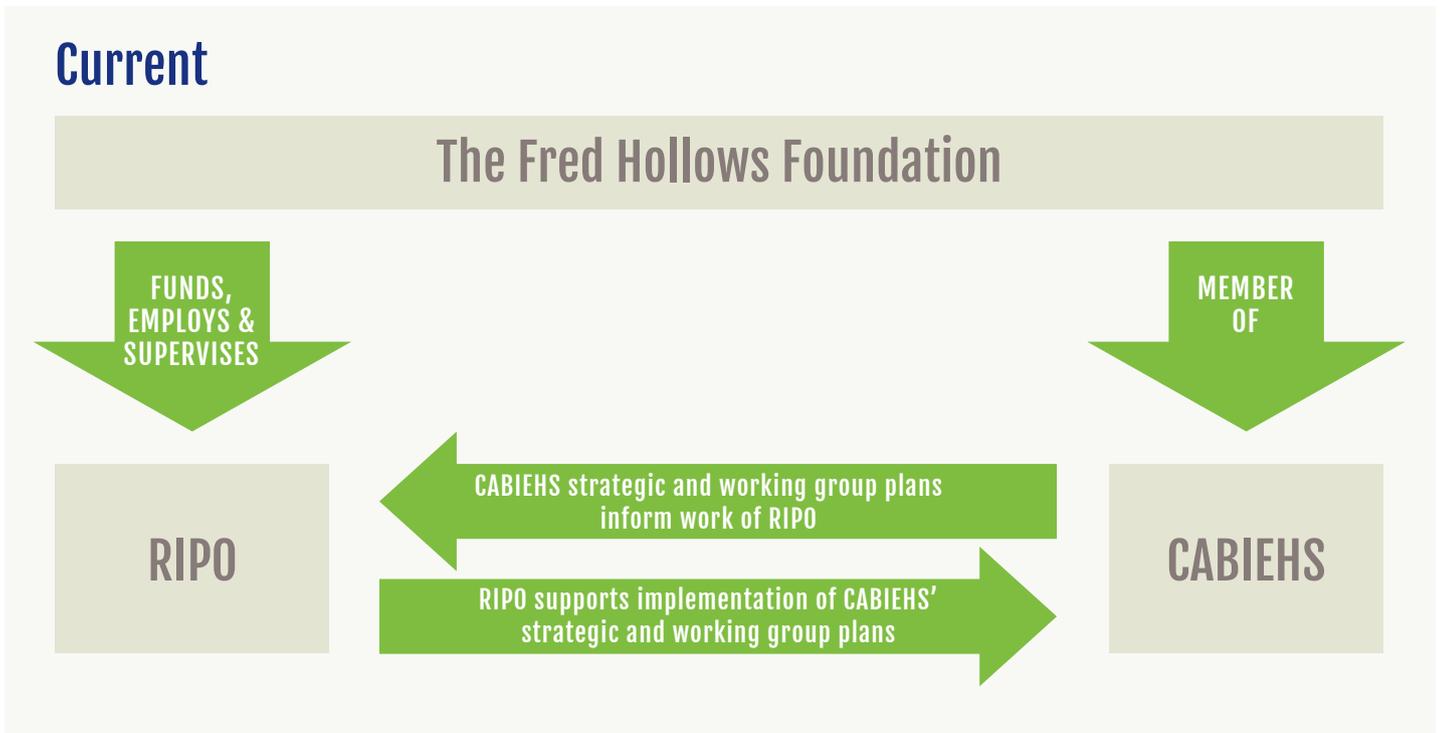
*Key stakeholder*

**“WE TEND TO OPERATE STILL, A BIT, IN SILOS... WE ARE STILL MISSING THE PRIMARY HEALTH PERSPECTIVE.”**

*Key stakeholder*

# Organisational diagram to represent RIPO model

These are current and proposed DRAFT diagrams for consideration



## A review of the RIPO role

This review was not focused on CABIEHS' performance or that of the occupant of the position. However, it should be noted that the overwhelming majority of stakeholder comments about the occupant and her performance were positive:

**“EVERYTHING SHE DOES, SHE DOES WELL... LOLA (THE RIPO) IS REALLY EASY TO WORK WITH... ALL HER COMMUNICATION IS HONEST AND POSITIVE. WE REALLY APPRECIATE THAT.... WE ALL HAVE TIME PRESSURES AND PAPERWORK AND TIMELINES CAN AT TIMES BE DIFFICULT.... WE HAVE GOT TO HAVE SOMEONE WITH GOOD COMMUNICATION SKILLS. SHE MAINTAINS GOOD RELATIONSHIPS AND KEEPS THEM WELL-OILED, WHILE BEING VERY MINDFUL OF THE REALITIES OF EACH ORGANISATION.”**

**“THE OCCUPANT COMMUNICATES EXTREMELY WELL, PATIENTLY, CONSISTENTLY, RESPECTFULLY AND WITH UNDERSTANDING OF LOCAL STRESSES, NEEDS AND ISSUES.”**



*The RIPO visiting a CABIEHS' member eye clinic in Barkly Region meets the "Iris Man" who educates the clients about the eyes and good eye care practices.*

## Lessons for regional eye coordination models

These are the lessons which may inform The Foundation's design of other regional coordination projects that aim to advance seamless client eye health pathways. Support positions, such as the RIPO, need to assist regional bodies to:

- Build and maintain a collaborative space, geared to achieving the group's common purpose of better eye health, where communication is safe, open and questioning and where there is sufficient engagement, member responsibility, trust and maturity to support analysis, comparison, reflection and identification of priority areas for collaborative or individual agency change and improvement.
- Move as quickly as possible from an establishment focus to an action, results and improvement focus.

To achieve this, any support positions should be:

- Based locally.
- Directed by, and answerable and accountable to, the regional coordinating body.
- Financially and organisationally sustainable over the medium, rather than short, term, including having the respect and support to attract and retain occupants with the subtle skills and considerable experience necessary to meet the expectations of such positions.
- Supported via the provision of information about emerging models and research and about relevant coordination and information tools and frameworks.
- Encouraged to link with peers to share ideas, strategies, resources and tools.