

FUNDING PLEA

Aboriginals' eyesight at risk: report

■ Sydney

More than 32,000 indigenous Australians will go blind over the next decade unless the Federal Government comes up with a "modest" increase in funding.

Spending is inefficient and does not reach two-thirds of those who need it, according to a report by PwC, commissioned by University of Melbourne Indigenous Eye Health.

It measures the value of implementing recommendations in the university's Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision.

It found the eyesight of more than 32,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people would be saved if the Government invested an extra \$227 million over 10 years.

Each extra dollar would return \$2.50, instead of the current 90¢, to the economy from productivity, tax and welfare savings — a total of \$578 million.

"Indigenous kids start off with much better vision than other kids, but by the age of 40 and above adults experience six

INDIGENOUS VISION

- 94 per cent of vision loss is preventable or treatable
- One-third of adults have never had even a basic eye exam
- Only 20 per cent of those with diabetes get the annual eye exam they need
- Implementing the Roadmap plan could save 32,000
- Current government funding is \$40 million for 2015-16

SOURCE: PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERS

times the rate of blindness," the university's Hugh Taylor said.

"We must provide indigenous Australians with the basic eye care that every other Australian needs and gets."

PwC said its report showed a practical way of achieving strong economic and social benefits for a modest investment.

"We can close 11 per cent of the health gap for indigenous people, essentially overnight," Professor Taylor said.

"You give someone glasses they will see right away, give them cataract surgery and they will see the next day."

AAP



Festive cheer: Marie Moscarda with her creations. Picture: Megan Powell

Christmas comes all year for tree stylist

Odd jobs & occu-passions 

Long before most of us dust off bonbons and unravel tinsel, Marie Moscarda is well and truly into the festive spirit.

The Christmas tree stylist works all year crafting the perfect ornaments to liven up Christmas. When the summer months begin, she and her team hit the ground running.

"We can work 12 to 14 hours a day. Everyone wants their tree up on December 1," Mrs Moscarda said. "I've always had a love for Christmas. It's one of those fantastic feel-good businesses because everyone smiles when we walk in the door."

She started her business five years ago after she identified a demand for Christmas tree hire.

As well as putting up trees and decorations for corporate functions and busy family homes, Mrs Moscarda decorates trees for those who cannot.

"We work for the disabled and elderly," she said.

She works out of her studio in Iluka but sources decorations from all over the world.

Claire Tyrell

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