24 October 2013

Considering invitations to attend events

**Background**

Members of the Optometry Board of Australia receive invitations to attend various events.

The Board recognises that successful implementation of the National Scheme requires engagement with a wide range of stakeholders¹ and has therefore developed this policy to assist with determining which invitations to accept.

**Goal**

To ensure the Board considers invitations to attend events using consistent criteria, and keeping in mind meaningful engagement with stakeholders on key issues.

**Principles**

The Board has adopted the following principles for considering invitations and protecting its integrity as a regulator.

- The Board seeks to engage appropriately with relevant stakeholders.
- The Board’s engagement with stakeholders will be consistent with its regulatory role and build direct lines of communication between the Board and registrants.
- The Board’s main way of engaging with stakeholders will be through the promotion and communication of its activities through its own communication strategies and channels (in partnership with AHPRA).
- Attending appropriate stakeholder events is a secondary strategy to the ongoing communications activities the Board undertakes.
- The Board will only accept an invitation if it does not create any impression (real or implied) of endorsement or partisanship.

**Policy**

It is Board policy that:

- all invitations received in the capacity as member or Chair of the Board must be submitted in writing (letter or email) addressed to the Chair
- invitations will be discussed at a standing agenda item on the Board’s agenda (both prospective attendance and reports on past events)
- its consideration of and decision about each invitation will be based on an assessment of:
  - potential for actual or perceived conflict of interest
  - likely number of attendees at an event
  - expected outcome of the activity/event

¹ See “Manual for National Boards and their committees”, section 2.2.
• how the activity/event is relevant to the Board’s purpose
• how the activity will add value to the Board’s responsibility to protect the public
• time commitment involved/availability of representative
• the cost of attendance
• the potential cost benefit to the Board to attend the event, and
• whether the desired outcome could be achieved in another way.

Procedures

• When attending any functions/events Board members must be very clear in communicating whether they are attending as individuals or as representatives of the Board.
• Board representatives speaking on behalf of the Board will only do so with the prior knowledge and permission of the Board (as per Manual for National Boards and their Committees).
• If an invitation is extended between Board meetings and cannot be deferred for discussion at the Board meeting, the Chair will decide in accordance with this policy.
• All Board members will ensure effective internal communication by advising the Chair and Executive Officer of all invitations and attendances.
• Any representative will report back to the Board after representing the Board at any event.

The Board agreed to this Policy at its meeting on 24 October 2013.