



THIRD MEETING OF THE OPTOMETRY BOARD OF AUSTRALIA 19 NOVEMBER 2009

The third meeting of the Optometry Board of Australia was held on 19 November 2009 at the Hilton Melbourne Airport. The Board is established under the *Health Practitioner Regulation (Administrative Arrangements) National Law Act 2008*.

The Board noted progress with implementation of the new national scheme. With respect to the legislative program the Board is pleased that:

- the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009* ('Bill B') has been passed without amendment by the Queensland Parliament and is due to commence on 1 July 2010 (this also covers adoption of the National Law for Queensland)
- in NSW the National Law has passed both houses of Parliament without amendment, and
- in Victoria the National Law has passed the lower house without amendment.

As in previous meetings, in its third meeting the Board focussed on the matters it had to resolve to enable the scheme to commence on 1 July 2010. The Board gave further consideration to matters of budget in order that the Board's first Health Profession Agreement can be prepared. The Board approved a budget for 2009-10 so that the Agency can commence employing staff and leasing premises for the new State and Territory and national offices. The Board noted that recruitment to senior positions in the national Agency is progressing on track.

The Board also considered its budget for 2010-11 and will give further consideration to this at future meetings, following the outcome of the registration migration process that will confirm final registrant numbers, and due diligence processes that will confirm reserves that will be transferred from existing State and Territory boards.

The Board discussed progress with the consultation on the Board's proposals for registration standards and scheduled medicines endorsement that were posted on the Agency's website (www.ahpra.gov.au) on 27 October 2009. The Board also considered the consultation papers from all other boards. The Board noted trends in responses to the paper received so far and the response received from the Governance Committee of the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council.

The consultation closes on 24 November 2009, and the Board encourages all interested parties to make their submissions so that the Board can consider the broadest possible range of views. At its December meeting, the Board will consider revised draft registration standards, and complete this work in order to submit the registration standards to the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council for approval.

The Board acknowledges the tight timetable for completion of this work. The timetable is necessary so that all registrants can have advice ahead of commencement day on 1 July 2010 of the new registration standards and requirements.

The Board discussed a draft code of conduct for the profession, and considered a range of issues concerning its content and whether such a code might be developed to apply commonly to all or more than one of the regulated health professions. The Board agreed to consider this again at its February meeting, with a view to releasing a draft code for public consultation.

The Board gave consideration to what other codes and guidelines might be needed for the optometry profession, on commencement of the national scheme. The Board agreed to work with other boards on the development of guidelines covering mandatory reporting obligations under the National Law, and advertising of optometry services. The Board expects to give consideration to drafts of these guidelines at its December meeting.

The Board also agreed a timetable for development of additional codes and guidelines specific to the optometry profession, with drafts to be considered at its February 2010 meeting. The Board agreed it will give priority to developing guidelines on ocular therapeutics, prescribing of optical appliances, and continuing professional development. The Board agreed that it would release its proposed draft codes and guidelines for public consultation on 5 March 2010.

The Board further considered arrangements for accreditation of optometry programs and the role of the Optometry Council of Australia and New Zealand (OCANZ). The Board decided to give priority to these matters at a special joint meeting to be held with OCANZ, scheduled for late January 2010.

The Board considered progress with the establishment of the Registration and Notification Management Information System, to support the Board's functions, as well as progress with the electronic document and management system, finance, human resources, electronic mail and Microsoft Office, and the web-based online services.

The Board acknowledged the continuing efforts of existing State and Territory boards in preparing for implementation of the national scheme, as well as accrediting bodies, AHPRA and the National Registration and Accreditation Implementation Project team. The Board looks forward to continued joint effort in coming months.

Colin Waldron
Chair, Optometry Board of Australia

23 November 2009