



Communique

Fifth Meeting of the Optometry Board of Australia 25 February 2010

The fifth meeting of the Optometry Board of Australia was held on 25 February 2010 in Melbourne. The Board is established under the *Health Practitioner Regulation (Administrative Arrangements) National Law Act 2008*.

As in previous meetings, in its fifth meeting the Board focused on the matters it had to resolve before the commencement of the national registration and accreditation scheme on 1 July 2010.

Proposed Registration Standards, Codes and Guidelines

The Board reviewed and amended its proposed registration standards and is currently awaiting the outcome of the consideration by Ministerial Council.

It considered draft guidelines on mandatory notifications, advertising, code of conduct, use of scheduled medicines, prescription of optical appliances, professional indemnity insurance and continuing professional development (CPD). The Board has released a consultation paper that sets out all its proposed codes and guidelines early in March and welcomes feedback. These are published at www.optometryboard.gov.au.

Issues for consultation:

- A profession specific code of conduct for optometry, addressing issues like providing good care, working with patients, effective communication, confidentiality and privacy, informed consent, patients with additional needs, adverse events and open disclosure, delegation referral and handover, teamwork, minimising risk, maintaining professional boundaries, health records, conflicts of interest, financial and commercial dealings
- Guidelines on mandatory reporting, explaining the situations when a health practitioner or their employer must notify the Board through the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency about a registered health practitioner's misconduct. There are four types of misconduct: intoxication, sexual misconduct, impairment and significantly departing from accepted professional standards. These guidelines are expected to be common across all National Boards
- Guidelines on Advertising, including what is acceptable advertising, such as factual statements about the services an optometrist provides. The Guidelines also define what is unacceptable, such as not disclosing risks associated with a treatment. The Guidelines clarify the acceptable use in advertising of titles (such as the courtesy title Doctor), warning statements, advertising of therapeutic goods, advertising of price and how to complain about a breach of the Guidelines. These guidelines are likely to be common across all National Boards
- Guidelines on the use of scheduled medicines by endorsed optometrists to support the proposed endorsement for scheduled medicines standard currently under consideration by Ministerial Council
- Guidelines on the prescription of optical appliances including the preparation and supply of prescriptions and optometrists' responsibilities

- Guidelines on professional indemnity insurance including the level of cover required for optometrists
- Guidelines on CPD, which support the proposed registration standard and which explain the accreditation of activities, what activities count as CPD and keeping records of CPD.

The Board also developed a CPD Policy to advise on the Board's goal to improve the quality of CPD presented to be published as part of its consultation paper.

The Board intends to develop a policy on the supply of optical appliances including cosmetic contact lenses.

Non-medical Prescribing

The Board agreed that the Chair should meet with the Chairs of the Nursing and Midwifery, and Podiatrist Boards to discuss membership and terms of reference for a cross professional advisory group to consider non-medical prescribing as an alternative model to its proposed Scheduled Medicines Advisory Committee.

Board Committees and Delegations

The Board considered the operation of committees and determined delegations to AHPRA to ensure that notifications are processed in a timely, accurate and consistent manner.

Accreditation

The Board continued its work on developing an accreditation agreement with the Optometry Council of Australian and New Zealand, the accrediting body assigned to accredit optometry programs of study leading to qualification for registration.

Student registration

Under the National Law Act, the Board will be required to register students. The Board is progressing this matter in conjunction with Schools of Optometry to ensure that from 2011, optometry students will be registered with the Board at the stage of their programs where they have contact with members of the public.

Registration Fees

The Board will be setting the 2010 - 2011 registration fees at its meeting in March and this will be communicated to the profession in April. The Board will also consider a number of administrative and financial matters at the March meeting leading to a service agreement between the Board and AHPRA.

Registration Transition Arrangements

The Board gave careful consideration to transitional arrangements for optometrists under the new registration scheme. Particular attention is being given to the issues of therapeutic endorsement and registrants without qualifications to use diagnostic drugs.

The Board also considered arrangements for optometrists whose registration is due for renewal on 1 July and agreed to work with existing State and Territory Boards to make the transition as simple as possible. Practitioners with registration renewal due around 1 July are encouraged to renew early.

The Board considered its communication needs in the lead up to commencement of the national scheme. It will be working very closely with State and Territory Boards during this period. Every registrant will receive a letter from the Board towards the end of April, detailing the transition process, advising them of their personal registration status and outlining what is required of them to ensure a safe transition to the National Scheme. Individual registrants are also encouraged to make sure that their contact details are up to date with their existing registration board, as this information will be transferred to the national scheme.

Regular updates and FAQs will be published on the National Board website.

Colin Waldron
Chair
19 March 2010