



Communiqué

Tenth Meeting of the Optometry Board of Australia 29 July 2010

The tenth meeting of the Optometry Board of Australia was held on 29 July 2010 in Melbourne. The Board is established under the *Health Practitioner Regulation (Administrative Arrangements) National Law Act 2008*.

As in previous meetings, at its tenth meeting the Board focused on the issues to support the smooth introduction of the national registration and accreditation scheme on 1 July 2010.

Commencement of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme

On 1 July 2010, the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme commenced. The Board congratulates the AHPRA staff and National Registration and Implementation Project team for the successful implementation of this enormous project in a very short period of time.

All jurisdictions joined the scheme with the exception of Western Australia, which is expected to join the scheme later in 2010. Until then, optometrists registered in Western Australia who wish to practise in other jurisdictions may only do so if they held registration in other jurisdictions on 30 June 2010 and they transitioned to the national scheme on 1 July 2010, or if an application for registration is lodged with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency to register with the Optometry Board of Australia. Further information is available on the Board and AHPRA websites.

Board Committees

The Board's committees were active during the first month of the national scheme in either planning or holding meetings to carry out important work for the Board. The Board's Continuing Professional Development Advisory Committee and Guidelines Advisory Committee held their first meetings in July. The Board's Registration and Notifications Committee and Scheduled Medicines Advisory Committee will hold their first meetings in August.

Continuing Professional Development Accreditation Committee

The role of the CPD Accreditation Committee is to advise the Board on the administration of CPD programs for optometrists. The committee will develop material to further advise optometrists about the process of accreditation of CPD activities that can be undertaken so practitioners can meet the CPD Registration Standard set by the Board. The committee will also provide further advice about recording unaccredited CPD activities as part of optometrists' annual CPD records. Information will also be made available to optometrists through the Optometrists Association of Australia about overseas CPD events that can be undertaken and recorded as meeting the Board's requirements. The Board reminds all optometrists to maintain accurate and complete records of CPD undertaken in preparation for the first audit of CPD which will occur after the first 12 month period of registration under the national scheme ending 30 November 2011.

Guidelines Advisory Committee

The committee is responsible for reviewing the Board's guidelines and advising the Board about the need to develop new guidelines. The Board approved an extension of the committee's terms of reference so it can now review the Board's registration standards. The Board also renamed the committee the Policies, Standards and Guidelines Advisory Committee. At its first meeting, the committee began work collating information on the state and territory requirements for prescribing of scheduled medicines by endorsed optometrists. The committee acknowledged the importance of this information for publication on the Board's website in the absence of common legislation across all jurisdictions. The committee will develop information to clarify for the public, issues regarding the supply of optical appliances and cosmetic lenses and the important role of optometrists in delivering these services to the public. The committee will begin work on developing guidelines for supervision of overseas optometrists.

Optometrists may hold general registration without endorsement. From 2012, all new local graduates will graduate with qualifications for general registration and endorsement for scheduled medicines. As a result, the Board resolved that the committee should conduct a feasibility study to determine whether all new registrants (including overseas qualified practitioners) should possess qualifications for therapeutic endorsement when they first seek general registration and if so, when this requirement should be introduced by the Board.

The Board registers graduates of accredited optometry courses without further examination. The Board received a proposal suggesting that it introduce a registration examination to ensure that only graduates demonstrating by examination that they are adequately prepared to practise, are eligible for registration. The Board has not decided to change its requirements for general registration at this time. However, after consulting with stakeholders, the Board will further investigate concerns raised about the work readiness of some new registrants to determine whether there are issues that require attention.

Scheduled Medicines Advisory Committee

The Board's Endorsement for scheduled medicines registration standard lists scheduled 2, 3 or 4 medicines that the Board has approved to endorse registered optometrists as qualified to obtain, possess, administer, prescribe or supply for the treatment of conditions of the eye.

The Scheduled Medicines Advisory Committee assists the Board in formulating standards of practice for the optometry profession in its use of scheduled medicines. The committee will advise the Board on matters related to the administration or prescribing of scheduled medicines by optometrists for diagnostic or therapeutic purposes. This includes the scheduled medicines or classes of medicines that are suitable for optometrists to administer or prescribe and any guidelines that might be required to support safe, competent and effective prescribing or administration practice by optometrists. The membership of the committee is designed to ensure the Board has access to a sufficient range of experts to provide the necessary advice. The committee will meet for the first time in August.

Registration or Notifications Committee

During August, the Board's Registration and Notifications Committee will conduct its first meeting and consider registration and notifications (complaints) under the National Law and will continue to consider open cases previously dealt with (but not finalised) by State and Territory Boards. The meeting will include an induction process for 16 jurisdictional members, who are registered optometrists with experience in dealing with similar matters under previous legislation.

Panels

The Board appointed individuals to a list of persons approved to be appointed as members of panels. The Board will establish health panels to consider matters arising from notifications or for any other reason about optometrists or students with possible health issues. It will establish performance and professional standards panels to consider other matters about optometrists. The individuals appointed have previously served in a similar capacity or on past State and Territory Optometry Boards. They bring a wealth of experience which will serve the Board and the public well.

Professional Indemnity Insurance

The Board published its Guideline on professional indemnity insurance (PII) for optometrists on its website. The guideline specifies the minimum level of cover required by optometrists in addition to the need for retroactivity and run-off cover. The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) has also released a communiqué on PII on its website (<http://www.ahpra.gov.au/en/News.aspx>) which provides further information which may guide practitioners about the different types of insurance policies available. Optometrists seeking to identify a type of policy which will meet their needs and comply with the Board's requirements may find the information in the communiqué helpful.

Fees and application forms

The Board published its schedule of fees on its website. Application forms for registration, including endorsement of registration and mutual recognition for optometrists registered in Western Australia who wish to practise in other jurisdictions are also available on the website at www.optometryboard.gov.au.

Student registration

Student registration will be introduced in 2011 across Australia and AHPRA will provide information to assist all Australian schools of optometry to meet their obligations under the National Law. Many optometrists routinely provide opportunities for students to undertake clinical training as part of the accredited programs undertaken by students. From 2011, all students will be required to be registered with the Optometry Board of Australia from the point of enrolment in an optometry specific course.

The Board agreed that a policy be developed to ensure optometrists are suitably advised that students must be registered to undertake clinical placements and that this requires providers of approved programs to provide details of students to the Board to enable registration. This will have consequences for students enrolled in overseas optometry programs which are not accredited by the Optometry Council of Australia and New Zealand (OCANZ) and therefore are not enrolled in programs approved by the Board. Optometrists considering providing clinical training to students enrolled in overseas optometry courses will need to ensure that these students have had their clinical training placements arranged by local approved schools of optometry to enable them to be registered by the Board.

Colin Waldron
Chair
11 August 2010