



Communiqué

Eleventh Meeting of the Optometry Board of Australia 29 August 2010

The eleventh meeting of the Optometry Board of Australia was held on 29 August 2010 at Aitken Hill. The Board also participated in a joint meeting of all National Boards and the Agency Management Committee on 28 August 2010 which included reviewing the year and planning the priorities and needs under the National Scheme. A presentation by Mr Harry Cayton, Chief Executive of the UK Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence provided an informative insight into measuring and reporting on professional regulation in the UK.

Student Registration

Under the National Law, the Board may register students undertaking approved courses to undertake clinical training, and students not enrolled in approved courses (e.g. overseas students) undertaking clinical training arranged by local education providers. The Board will develop information to guide optometrists about dealing with requests from other individuals for whom there are no provisions under the National Law to gain student registration and who wish to undertake the equivalent of clinical training.

Fees

The Board finalised business rules which apply to fees for registration. The registration period for optometrists begins on 1 December and ends on 30 November annually. Applicants for general and non-practising registration will be required to pay the full fee unless applying during the last two months prior to the renewal date (during October and November) in which case the full fee paid will provide registration for the following 12 month period as well.

Panels

The Board appointed individuals to a list of persons approved to be appointed as members of panels. AHPRA has also developed processes for the recruitment of additional individuals for appointment by the Board as panel members to meet the Board's future needs.

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 held its first meeting in August. Chaired by Ms Jane Duffy, (an optometrist member of the Board), the committee's membership includes optometrists, pharmacists, an ophthalmologist, a medical practitioner, educators and researchers. One of its first tasks will be to review the Board's guidelines with particular focus on the guidelines for care of patients with glaucoma.

Registration and Notifications Committee

During August, the Board's Registration and Notifications Committee conducted its first meeting which included induction for its 16 jurisdictional members, who are registered optometrists with experience in dealing with similar matters under previous legislation. The committee will consider notifications (complaints) under previous legislation if received prior to commencement of the national scheme and notifications under the National Law if received on or after 1 July 2010.

Overseas Practitioners

The Board reviewed the opportunities for overseas practitioners to undertake examinations to qualify for registration and endorsement for scheduled medicines and considered whether these opportunities impact on the ability of these practitioners to gain registration. The Board concluded that there are presently sufficient opportunities for overseas practitioners to qualify for registration. The Board also agreed to review whether overseas practitioners should be required to enter the profession with equivalent qualifications to entry level optometrists in the future who will hold qualifications for both general registration and endorsement for scheduled medicines from 2013.

Colin Waldron
Chair
7 September 2010