



Communiqué

The fifteenth meeting of the Optometry Board of Australia (the Board) was held on 17 December 2010 at the National AHPRA offices in Melbourne. This communiqué outlines the issues discussed and includes some reminders on upcoming consultations and provides an overview of some important processes and resources.

Newsletter and email addresses

The Board will be publishing its first newsletter on its website in coming weeks and is committed to providing ongoing newsletters in electronic format both on its website and sent to your individual email addresses.

We encourage you to register a current email address with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA). This can be done by completing the form 'Request for change of address details on the register - CHDT-00' available on the AHPRA [website](#).

Optometrists without qualifications in diagnostics

Prior to the introduction of the national registration scheme some states identified, through formal and informal processes, those optometrists who do not hold qualifications in diagnostics. Under the national scheme there is no data available to identify these optometrists or to publish on the public register.

The Board considers diagnostics, including the use of diagnostic drugs, as a core competency in the practice of optometry within Australia and as such would expect any optometrist who does not hold these qualifications to limit their scope of practice and not undertake these activities.

Optometrists who do not hold these qualifications must make alternative options available for their patients.

The Board may develop guidelines on this issue in the future but reminds these optometrists of the importance of not working beyond the scope of practice that they are educated for and competent in. Employers have a duty of care to ensure that the optometrists they employ are educated and competent to undertake any activity required of them.

Mandatory reporting

Western Australia joined the national registration scheme on 18 October 2010. The legislation passed in this state to bring them into the scheme varies slightly with regards the mandatory notification requirements on health professionals.

All health practitioners, except those practicing in Western Australia, are required



under the National Law as in force in each state and territory to report 'notifiable conduct' of health practitioners, as defined in s. 140 of the National Law, to the National Agency in order to prevent the public being placed at risk of harm.

The Board has developed guidelines to provide direction to registered health practitioners, employers of practitioners and education providers about these requirements. The guidelines have been developed to help practitioners, employers and education providers understand how to work with these requirements; that is, whether they must make a notification about a health practitioner's conduct and when.

Health practitioners practising in Western Australia are not required to make a mandatory notification about patients (or clients) who are practitioners or students in one of the health professions. However, practitioners in Western Australia continue to have a professional and ethical obligation to protect and promote public health and safety. They are therefore encouraged to make a voluntary notification or encourage the practitioner or student they are treating to self-report.

The Board is working with AHPRA and the other National Boards to revise the guideline to reflect the Western Australian circumstances.

CPD

The Board has developed and approved a range of documents that outline the requirements regarding continuing professional development for all optometrists who hold general registration with the Board.

The Board has developed a set of FAQs and a list of non-accredited providers and activities that will be generally be approved by the Board for the purpose of the CPD requirements. These are available on the Board's website.

The Board is developing a CPD specific section of its website. This will be in place in early 2011. This section will list all the Board's standards and guidelines and other information relating to CPD in one place.

Optometrists are encouraged to review the information on an ongoing basis so that they can better understand their obligations under the national registration scheme.

Protected titles for Optometry under the National Law

The Board wishes to draw attention to the provisions of the Health Practitioner Regulation Law (National Law) as in force in each state and territory in regard to protected title.

Section 113 of the National Law lists the protected titles for optometry as

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'optometrist' and 'optician'. This section also details the restriction on the use of these protected titles and the requirements of both individuals and bodies corporate in relation to these titles. Importantly, the relevant titles are protected whether they are used with or without any other words and whether in English or any other language.

The Board is of the view that use of the term 'Dispensing Optician' contravenes the restrictions on use of the protected title 'optician'.

[Endorsement for scheduled medicines on the public register](#)

The Board is aware of the difficulty in checking if an optometrist holds endorsement for scheduled medicines on the public register. The Board is working with AHPRA to try and improve this.

In the interim, to check the endorsement status of an optometrist:

1. Go to the search function for the [public register](#) on the AHPRA website.
2. Enter the required information to commence the search.
3. When the search results appear, click on the link at the word 'view' at the end of the result line under the detail section.
4. A second screen will open. Scroll down to the endorsement section. If an optometrist holds a current endorsement, then the words 'scheduled medicines – optometry' will be listed under the endorsement heading.

[Consultation on therapeutic qualifications as a requirement for general registration](#)

In its previous communiqués the Board has referred to an upcoming consultation process on the proposal for therapeutic qualifications to be a requirement for general registration. The Board will publish a consultation document on its website on 17 January 2011. All registered optometrists will also receive a letter and a copy of the consultation document. The Board is interested in hearing from a range of stakeholders and encourages you to consider the document and respond.

[Registration renewal](#)

It is important that all registered optometrists are aware of the importance of renewing their registration on time under the national scheme. AHPRA will manage the renewal process on behalf of the Board. You will be provided with at least two months notice before your registration is due. Those registrants who do not renew their registration within one month after the due date will see their registration lapse and their name removed from the register.

The Board would like to remind all optometrists that the primary responsibility for renewing lies with the individual. To ensure that there are no difficulties in receiving the renewal notice, optometrists should notify AHPRA of any changes to their contact



details as soon as practical. A change of address form is available on the AHPRA [website](#).

If you have not received a renewal notice and your registration is due for renewal then you should call AHPRA on 1300 419 495 to ask for your user name and password to access the online renewal service.

The AHPRA website outlines the stages in the [registration process](#). When you complete the online form or hard copy renewal form it goes through an initial assessment. There may be times when further assessment is required. During this time your name will remain on the public register and you are able to continue to practise. Routine applications for renewal of registration take less time than more complex applications.

The Board has been informed by AHPRA that there is a delay in the issuing of the receipts for payments made online for those who have renewed in recent weeks. Optometrists who have renewed their registration online are advised to check that their payment has been debited correctly from your bank account and that your name appears on the public register.

If you have any concern regarding this, please contact AHPRA on 1300 419 495 or via the [online enquiry form](#).

[Reporting of adverse events associated with medicines to Therapeutic Goods Australia](#)

The Board has received correspondence from the National Manager of Therapeutic Goods Administration on adverse event reporting associated with medicines and medical devices by health care professionals.

Adverse event reporting allows the TGA to monitor, investigate and take action on medicines and medical devices safety issues. The TGA encourages all health professionals to report all suspected adverse events associated with medicines and devices, particularly those associated with new products or serious outcomes such as admission to hospital or prolongation of hospitalisation. The reporting plays a key role in the TGA's work to identify potential relationships between a therapeutic good and a series of adverse events.

The Board encourages all optometrists to familiarise themselves with the reporting process. More information is available at the TGA website (www.tga.gov.au).

Conclusion

The Board is looking forward to a busy 2011 where it will continue to work with AHPRA to implement the processes required to support the national registration



scheme. The Board encourages you to review the Board's website on a regular basis and contribute to the consultation processes that the Board undertakes.

On behalf of the Board and AHPRA I would like to wish all optometrists a safe and peaceful festive season.

Colin Waldron
Chair