



## Update on consultation process

14 February 2011

### **Optometry Board of Australia consultation document on proposal for therapeutic qualification to be included as a requirement for general registration**

This statement is provided following requests for more information about the Board's consultation on the proposal that therapeutics qualifications be included as a requirement for general registration.

I can confirm that the Board has not made any decisions and does not plan to force currently registered optometrists to complete therapeutic qualifications. Optometrists who do not complete therapeutic qualifications will still be able to practice but their scope of practice will not include prescribing therapeutics as it is today.

All optometrists registered with the Optometry Board of Australia should be aware of the following key points. These were also provided to the Optometrists Association Australia earlier this month.

- In registering optometrists the Board is always mindful of its over arching legislative obligation to protect the public. We can see changes happening that we must address. We are considering if the qualifications required for general registration should be expanded to reflect the increasing numbers of optometrists who have completed therapeutic qualifications and if so, how and when that should be done.
- About 20% of current registered optometrists have therapeutic qualifications and 80% do not. By the end of the decade it is anticipated these numbers will be reversed as all Australian and New Zealand graduates from 2014 will complete therapeutic qualifications as a part of their undergraduate degree. The numbers of registered optometrists with endorsement after completing therapeutic qualifications will also increase.
- The optometrists with general registration who hold therapeutic qualifications currently have an endorsement on their registration. This identifies them from those who do not hold these qualifications.
- The consultation document asks stakeholders to consider how the Board should register optometrists when most optometrists have completed therapeutic qualifications. It might be a case of those including therapeutic qualifications as a requirement for general registration and noting on the registration record of practitioners who choose not to undertake therapeutics qualification that they do not hold such qualifications and are not able to prescribe therapeutics.
- The Board will also need to establish the requirements for overseas trained optometrists applying for general registration in Australia.

I hope this statement will allay any concerns that optometrists registered with the Board have about this proposal. I apologise for any concern, confusion or misunderstanding the document may have caused.

The Board will publish a summary report from this consultation on its website after the process is completed. There will be further consultation on this matter after this initial stage. The next stage will outline the registration arrangements for new, returning, existing and overseas trained optometrists.

I encourage you to review the [consultation paper](#) and forward any comments to the Board by 4 March 2011.

**Colin Waldron**  
Chair