

Communiqué

The twentieth meeting of the Optometry Board of Australia (the Board) was held on 23 June 2011 at the Australian Health Practitioner Regulatory Agency (AHPRA) national offices in Melbourne. This communiqué outlines the issues discussed and decisions made by the Board.

Registration renewal

Optometrists whose principal place of practice is WA or ACT should now have renewed their registration for the first time under the National Scheme. If you are one of these optometrists and you did not renew your registration by 30 June you have a further month (late period) in which to do so. At the end of this one month, if you have not renewed your registration, your name will be removed from the register and you will not be able to practice as an optometrist nor have access to Medicare provider numbers. This has serious implications for you and your patients. If you wish to re-register after this time, you can apply for Fast Track registration up to one month after your registration has lapsed.

If you are a WA or ACT optometrist and you have not received any renewal correspondence from AHPRA or if you have any queries about completing your renewal application contact AHPRA immediately on 1300 419 495.

On receipt of your renewal application, AHPRA will assess the declarations that you have made in this application. There may need to be additional assessment and consideration of your application. This may involve referral to the Board's registration and notification committee. The main reason for delays in processing is incomplete documentation, so please ensure you check your application before submitting it.

It is important to remember that during this time of assessment, under the National Law, you are able to practise while your renewal application is being processed. You also remain registered for one month after your registration expiry date listed on the Register. If your name appears on the Register, you are registered and can practise (excepting optometrists with a Registration Type of 'non-practising' or those with a condition which stops them from practising, or where their registration is suspended).

All optometrists in Australia are now due to renew their registration by 30 November each year.

Contact details

As referred to last month, thank you to everyone who has responded and checked their contact details with AHPRA. The increase in email addresses listed for optometrists will mean AHPRA can quickly, efficiently and directly send you important registration information and the Board can send information about important issues relating to your registration and the profession.

Checking the details AHPRA holds for you is easy. If you have your AHPRA user ID and pass code go online at www.ahpra.gov.au and click online services located in the top right hand corner, then follow the prompts to update your contact details.

If you do not yet have your user ID, complete an [online enquiry form](#) and select 'User ID' as the enquiry type. These will be then sent to you and you can then access the online services.

CPD

Thank you to everyone who has contacted the Board to clarify issues regarding the CPD registration standard and guidelines. We have also had the chance to speak with some of you directly at recent conferences.

The Board is aware of a range of common issues faced by optometrists in the implementation of the new CPD requirements. The Board is currently working on a range of issues and will be publishing the outcomes in coming months in communiqués, an e-newsletter and on its website.

In the interim, the Board has published two templates that you may choose to use to assist you in meeting the record keeping requirements of the [CPD registration standard](#). All optometrists should familiarise themselves with and adhere to these requirements. Evidence of meeting these requirements will form the basis of upcoming audit of compliance with the registration standards.

Registration fees

At its meeting the Board considered the registration fees for optometry for the 2011/12 financial year. It has limited the increase to the fees to CPI. The new fee schedule is published on the Board's [website](#).

The National Scheme is funded entirely by registration fees paid by practitioners. There is no ongoing government funding for the regulation of the profession as was the case in some states and territories prior to 1 July 2010. The only exception to this is NSW who have a co-regulatory model (the Health Professions Councils attend to notifications in NSW) with an ongoing input of funding from the NSW government.

The fees were set at a level that enables the Board and AHPRA to meet their responsibilities under the National Law. Fees are set to ensure the Board can continue to provide robust and safe regulation of optometry in Australia.

The Board's role is to protect the public through ensuring that optometrists registered in Australia are adequately qualified and experienced, and that registration and notification processes meet the needs of the public and the profession.

Conclusion

On 1 July AHPRA and the Board celebrated the first year of operation of the National Scheme.

At this time the Board would like to acknowledge some of the challenges faced by the profession as a whole in adapting to the new requirements of the scheme and the difficulties some individuals faced in the initial renewal of their registration. The Board is committed to working with the profession and AHPRA to increase understanding of the Board's intent in setting the requirements for registration as an optometrist. The Board and AHPRA are working toward ongoing improvements in registration and notification processes.

A lot of information about registration and the Board's expectations of practitioners is published on the Board website at www.optometryboard.gov.au or www.ahpra.gov.au. For more detail or with questions about your registration please send an [online enquiry form](#) or contact AHPRA on 1300 419 495.

Colin Waldron
Chair
4 July 2011