

Communiqué

The 50th meeting of the Optometry Board of Australia (the Board) was held on 27 March 2014 at the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) national office in Melbourne. This communiqué outlines the issues and decisions from this meeting as well as other points of interest.

We publish it on our website and email it to a broad range of stakeholders. Please forward it to your colleagues and employees who may be interested.

Audit update

The 2014 random audit has commenced for a number of optometrists to ensure compliance with declarations made during the previous renewal period. This year the audit is focusing on compliance with the registration standards for criminal history, professional development and recency of practice. To assist those optometrists who have been audited resources are available from the Board website.

Privacy Act changes

Amendments to the *Privacy Act 1988* took effect on 12 March 2014. Optometrists are obliged to ensure that how they collect and maintain information is in accordance with the requirements of the Act and the amended Australian Privacy Principles.

These amendments to the Act and the Australian Privacy Principles apply to the Board and AHPRA. An updated privacy policy ensuring the National Law is administered in accordance with those changes is available under Privacy on the AHPRA website.

More information is available under *Privacy law reform* on the website of the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner.

Advertising guidelines: update

Revised *Advertising guidelines* came into effect on 17 March 2014 for all the regulated health professions. These are published under *Codes and guidelines* on the National Board website.

The guidelines were developed by the National Boards and explain the requirements of the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (National Law) in relation to advertising and the use of testimonials in advertising. The National Law does not allow testimonials to be used when advertising a regulated health service (section 133).

On 26 March 2014 the Medical Board of Australia announced it would revise the guidelines to make them clearer about the use of testimonials. Read the news item on the Medical Board of Australia website.

The Optometry Board of Australia, along with the other 13 National Boards, is now considering whether to revise and clarify the wording on testimonials as part of implementing the new *Advertising guidelines*. The Board's next newsletter will focus on advertising, testimonials and social media.

We will keep practitioners informed and in the meantime, AHPRA is managing complaints about advertising in line with the information in the advertising FAQ on the National Board website.

This means practitioners are not responsible for removing (or trying to have removed) unsolicited testimonials published on a website or in social media over which they don't have control.

Updates from the Board

The Board will be releasing its next e-newsletter in coming weeks. To ensure that future editions of the newsletter reach you, please check your contact details and update them if necessary. Email accounts should be set to receive communications from AHPRA and the Board to avoid misdirection to an account junk box.

To update your contact details, go to www.ahpra.gov.au, log in to Your Account on the homepage, use your unique contact number (User ID) and follow the prompts. Your User ID is not your registration number. If you do not have your User ID, complete an online enquiry form, selecting 'User ID' as the category of enquiry or by calling 1300 419 495.

More information

We publish a range of information about registration and our expectations of you as an optometrist on our website at www.optometryboard.gov.au or www.ahpra.gov.au.

For more detail or questions about your registration or renewal please send an online enquiry form or contact AHPRA on 1300 419 495.

Colin Waldron

Chair, Optometry Board of Australia

20 May 2014