

Communiqué

The 56th meeting of the Optometry Board of Australia (the Board) was held on 24 September 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.

Reminder – Changes to general registration – Addition of notation 1 December

The Board is progressing the [new registration standard for initial graduates](#) that will come into effect on 1 December 2014. AHPRA sent a letter to existing optometrists who, based on their current registration status, will not be endorsed for scheduled medicines on 1 December 2014. The letter reminded these practitioners that a notation will be added to the public register and details will appear on the back of their registration certificate stating: 'The optometrist is not qualified for endorsement for scheduled medicines and is not able to prescribe Schedule 4 medicines for the treatment of conditions of the eye.' The wording of the notation appears in the registration standard and was approved by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council on 27 April 2012. As this change to the registration status of the majority of optometrists is occurring during the renewal period, a hard copy registration certificate will not be sent to optometrists applying to renew their registration until after 1 December 2014.

Renewal

Renewal of registration for optometrists is now open. More than 4,500 optometrists with general or non-practising registration are due to renew their registration with the Board by 30 November. Under the National Law, all registered optometrists are responsible for renewing their registration on time each year.

Please carefully read the Board's [registration standards](#), which specify the requirements for practice before applying to renew your registration. Make sure you understand the declarations you must make about meeting the Board's registration standards when completing your renewal application. You could be asked to give evidence to support your declarations so it's important to know what the requirements are for registration.

AHPRA, on behalf of the Board, is sending out a series of reminders to practitioners who have provided AHPRA with their email address. It is important that optometrists make sure AHPRA has their current contact information so they don't miss future email and hard copy reminders to renew.

To renew online or update your contact details using AHPRA's secure online services, optometrists can visit the Board's website at www.optometryboard.gov.au. Select 'renew your registration online' in the practitioner box on the home page and follow the prompts.

Anyone who experiences difficulties using the online renewal service can phone the AHPRA Customer Service Team on 1300 419 495 and a team member will talk them through the process.

Title restrictions – Specialist

When interacting with optometrists, the Board has observed an increasing use of the word 'specialist' by some optometrists to define or describe a particular area of optometric service to the public. The Board would like to emphasise that the use of the title 'specialist' or any derivative is protected under the National Law and its use is restricted. The specialist titles recognised under the National Law only relate to medical, dental or podiatric specialists. The Board suggests optometrists consider promoting areas of proficiency or expertise in optometric practice to the public and to not refer to an area of speciality optometric practice.

Fee reduction

The Board reviewed and reduced its fees. The Board sets fees to enable it to meet its responsibilities under the National Law and regulate optometrists effectively, in the public interest. The Board ensures that optometrists are adequately qualified and experienced, and sets registration standards, policies, codes and guidelines to guide the profession and promote public safety.

The Board announced on 27 August 2014 that the national registration fee for optometrists would be reduced to \$365, \$30 less than the previous year. The fee for optometrists whose principal place of practice is NSW was increased to \$337 from the previous year's fee of \$334.

Further 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 AHRPA on 1300 419 495.

Colin Waldron

Chair, Optometry Board of Australia

14 October 2014