

Communiqué

The 60th meeting of the Optometry Board of Australia (the Board) was held on 26 February 2015 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.

Supply of novelty contact lenses and supply of optical appliances policies retired

The Board has identified upon review of the policies that these public interest issues, that may be the result of actions by persons who are not registered optometrists, are best recorded differently for future reference. As a result the Board has decided to retire the two policies from circulation.

The first policy pertains to the supply of cosmetic and novelty contact lenses regarding non-practitioners. The Board will respond to this issue in the future if required, taking into consideration the current legislative situation. The second policy concerns the supply of optical appliances. A Board consultation this year on the prescription of optical appliances will also address any issues on the supply of optical appliances.

New approach to international criminal history checks

The Board noted a new procedure for checking international criminal history to provide greater public protection is now being implemented by all National Boards and AHPRA. Effective from 4 February 2015, this new approach requires [certain applicants and practitioners](#) to apply for an international criminal history check from an AHPRA approved supplier and was first announced in November last year. The supplier will provide the international criminal history check report to the applicant and directly to AHPRA.

The new process for checking international criminal history aims to strike a balance between public safety and regulatory burden for practitioners. More information is in the [media release](#) on the Board's website.

Board and AHPRA strengthen national drug screening

Mandatory hair testing will be routine for all registered health practitioners with substance-related impairment, under a screening protocol to be introduced by AHPRA and the National Boards. Under the protocol, all health practitioners who have restrictions on their registration linked to past substance abuse will have routine hair testing in addition to urine testing.

Routine hair testing helps provide comprehensive information about the use – over time – of a wide range of drugs (not just based on the practitioner's drug-taking history).

The protocol provides a clear framework across professions for AHPRA's advice to National Boards about the management of registered practitioners with drug-related impairment. It will make sure drug screening in the National Scheme is evidence based, effective and up to date. More information is in the [media release](#) on the Board's website.

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 information or help with 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

11 March 2015