

## Communiqué

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The 61st meeting of the Optometry Board of Australia (the Board) was held on 26 March 2015 at the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) New South Wales office in Sydney.

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.

### Scheduled Medicines Advisory Committee

The Board has conducted an expression of interest process to recruit members to the Scheduled Medicines Advisory Committee for a period of three years to February 2018.

The Board called for applications from:

- optometrists who hold a scheduled medicine endorsement under the National Law<sup>1</sup> or a law of a participating jurisdictions
- pharmacists
- medical practitioners who practice as an ophthalmologist
- medical practitioners with other relevant expertise
- optometrists who are academics or educators in optometry, and
- academics and educators in pharmacology.

Membership of the advisory group is being finalised and an announcement will be made shortly. The committee will continue to be chaired Jane Duffy, a member of the Optometry Board of Australia.

### Board work plan

The Board undertook a review of its work plan in conjunction with the March meeting. Issues discussed included:

- reviewing and consulting on the *Continuing professional development registration standard* and the *Endorsement for scheduled medicines registration standard*
- ensuring continued consistency in notifications handling
- developing guidelines for supervisors of optometrists returning to practice, and
- ongoing communication with the accreditation body, the Optometry Council of Australia and New Zealand (OCANZ).

### Improving monitoring of conditions on practitioner registration

AHPRA has welcomed calls for stringent monitoring and swift detection of breaches in compliance by registered health practitioners with restrictions on their registration.

On 24 March 2015, the Queensland Office of the Health Ombudsman (OHO) published a report recommending a range of initiatives to strengthen monitoring and compliance in Queensland and the National Scheme.

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<sup>1</sup> The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory.

The report's recommendations affirm the sweeping changes AHPRA has already initiated to strengthen its compliance and monitoring program.

AHPRA's detailed response to the OHO and the recommendations in the report is published in the [Corporate publications](#) section of AHPRA's website.

Since July 2014, health complaints management in Queensland for registered health practitioners has involved a partnership between National Boards, AHPRA and the OHO.

Improvements to compliance monitoring add to the overhaul of complaints management in Queensland that started in 2012. Recent initiatives include preparation for stricter drug and alcohol screening announced in February 2015, the appointment of a national compliance manager and stronger national coordination of the compliance function.

For more information, please read the [media release](#) on AHPRA's website.

### **Security tip – keep your web browser updated**

AHPRA and the National Boards are making changes to our websites to ensure your information is kept safe.

From early April 2015, anyone using Internet Explorer version 6 (or an older version) to view the Board's website is likely to experience difficulty accessing web pages and online services.

To avoid an interruption to service, we recommend you upgrade to the newest version of Internet Explorer immediately. It is available for free from Microsoft.

If you are using a new version of Internet Explorer and are still having difficulty accessing our website please contact us to report your experience:

Call 1300 419 495 Monday to Friday, 9:00am to 5:00pm (Australian Eastern Standard Time).

### **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](http://www.optometryboard.gov.au) or [www.ahpra.gov.au](http://www.ahpra.gov.au).

For more information or help with 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

12 May 2015