



Media release

21 July 2015

Optometrists reminded to use only protected titles

The Optometry Board of Australia (the Board) is reminding optometrists to use only protected titles.

The Board is concerned that some optometrists are using titles and terms that are not 'protected titles' for the profession, such as 'specialist optometrist' and 'specialists in contact lens'. All registered optometrists can use the title 'optometrist' or 'optician'. It is also acceptable to list credentials and recognised qualifications in advertising.

Under the National Law¹, there is no specialist registration for optometry and the title 'specialist' is restricted. It is therefore unlawful for optometrists to call themselves specialists or imply that they are specialists. The specialist titles recognised under the National Law only relate to medical, dental or podiatric specialists.

It is not acceptable to claim specialisation or use words such as 'specialist', 'specialty' or 'specialise' (or any other words deriving from 'special') as it may give the impression that an optometrist is a specialist in a particular area, which is contrary to the advertising provisions of the National Law. However, an optometrist could reasonably say they have an 'interest', 'experience' or 'predominantly practise' in an area of practice.

The Board urges optometrists to read its [Guidelines for advertising of regulated health services](#) which advise optometrists that use of the protected titles should make it clear to the public what is their area of expertise and qualification.

'It is important the language used within the optometry profession is aligned with the requirements of the National Law to provide clarity for registered optometrists and the public; and to reduce any inadvertent use of unacceptable terms,' Board Chair Colin Waldron said.

The National Law protects the public by ensuring that only registered optometrists who are suitably trained and qualified can use protected titles. The law allows for penalties for falsely using protected titles or holding yourself out to be a registered practitioner.

Concerns about advertising

Concerns about the advertising of registered optometrists are managed by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) on behalf of the Board.

Practitioners who breach the guidelines and/or the National Law will initially receive a letter from AHPRA asking them to amend or remove their advertising so as to comply with the National Law and the Board's advertising guidelines.

¹ The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law)

If a practitioner fails to comply with a first warning letter, a second letter will be sent to them. If the practitioner again fails to amend or remove their advertising the matter will be referred to AHPRA's Statutory Offences Unit, to consider whether it is appropriate for prosecution.

For more information

- Make a [notification](#)
- Lodge an [online enquiry form](#)
- For registration enquiries: 1300 419 495 (within Australia) +61 3 9275 9009 (overseas callers)
- For media enquiries: (03) 8708 9200