



Media release

10 November 2016

Efficiency and effectiveness were key priorities for the Optometry Board of Australia in 2015/16

The Optometry Board of Australia reviewed its committee structure in 2015/16 in line with the guiding principles of the National Scheme to provide efficient and effective regulation of health professions in Australia, according to information published by AHPRA today in its [2015/16 annual report](#).

The 2015/16 annual report by AHPRA and the national health practitioner boards is a comprehensive record of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme for the 12 months ending 30 June 2016.

‘Efficient management by the Board means we can focus on what matters most – protecting the public,’ said Mr Ian Bluntish, Chair of the Optometry Board of Australia. ‘We also want to ensure that practitioners are not unduly burdened by the cost of registration. Last year, we reduced registration fees for the third year in a row while still accruing sufficient income to meet our regulatory obligations.’

The Board continued its regular reviews of registration standards and guidelines to ensure they remain up-to-date and relevant to the profession. A new [Recency of practice registration standard](#) took effect on 1 December 2015, [Guidelines on the prescription of optical appliances](#) took effect on 1 June 2016, and the [Professional indemnity insurance arrangements registration standard](#) took effect on 1 July 2016.

‘The revised standards strike a balance between protecting the public and the professional obligations of practitioners,’ said Mr Bluntish.

The Board continues to consult with the profession and other stakeholders on the endorsement of scheduled medicines and continuing professional development standards and guidelines.

More highlights of the past year include:

- **More health practitioners overall:** There were almost 20,000 more registrants in 2015/16 across the 14 regulated professions than there were last year, totalling 657,621 health practitioners nationally. Student registrations increased by more than 11,000 registrants year-on-year, totalling 153,710.
- **A simplified renewal process:** Online registration renewals reached a new high across all professions – with over 98% of all registrants renewing online and on time, making it easier for health practitioners to renew their registration each year.
- **Increased registration:** As of 30 June 2016, there were 5,142 optometrists registered across Australia, an increase of 4.6% from the previous year. The Board received 339 new applications for registration in 2015/16, an increase of 30.8% year on year.
- **Greater awareness of the National Scheme:** A nationwide campaign aimed at employers, practitioners and the general public rolled out across social media and in print advertising.
- **Growth in notifications:** There were 10,082 notifications received during the year across all 14 health professions, an increase of 19.7% nationally (representing 1.5% of the registration base). The

top three notifier complaints related to clinical care (41.8%), medication issues (11.5%) and health impairment (10.7%). Just under half of all notifications were made by a patient, relative or member of the public. AHPRA closed 5,227 matters in the year.

- **Fewer notifications received nationally about optometrists:** In 2015/16 there were 39 notifications received nationally (including data from the Health Professional Councils Authority in NSW), a decrease of 29.1% from the previous year. Notifications about optometrists represented just 0.3% of all notifications received by AHPRA (excluding HPCA).
- **Less than 1% of all statutory offence matters related to optometry:** AHPRA received nine new complaints about possible statutory offences by optometrists in the past year. Almost all new matters related to the use of protected titles and advertising concerns. Nine statutory complaint matters were considered and closed.

For more data and information relating to the Optometry Board of Australia in 2015/16, please see www.ahpra.gov.au/annualreport/2016. The report provides a nationwide snapshot of the work of AHPRA and the Boards and highlights a multi profession approach to risk-based regulation with a clear focus on ensuring that Australians have a safe and competent health workforce.

‘The regulation of over 660,000 registered health practitioners across 14 health professions and eight states and territories is an important task,’ said AHPRA CEO Mr Martin Fletcher. ‘There are many things to consider in regulation – but there is only one main focus, and that is public safety.’

Supplementary tables that break down data across categories such as registrations, notifications, statutory offences, tribunals and appeals, and monitoring and compliance can also be found on the annual report website.

In the coming months, AHPRA and the National Boards will also publish summaries of our work regulating health practitioners in every state and territory, which will be released in late 2016. Expanded, profession-specific summaries will also be released and progressively published from early 2017.

For more information

- Visit www.ahpra.gov.au/annualreport/2016
- For online enquiries visit www.ahpra.gov.au/enquiry
- For registration enquiries: 1300 419 495 (within Australia) +61 3 9275 9009 (overseas callers)
- For media enquiries: (03) 8708 9200