



## Communiqué: Optometry Board of Australia

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### February 2019 meeting

The 100<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Optometry Board of Australia (the Board) was held on 1 March 2019 in Melbourne due to the participation by National Board members at the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (NRAS) Combined Meeting on 28 February 2019.

This communiqué outlines the issues and decisions from these meetings 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.

#### **NRAS Combined Meeting**

The biennial NRAS Combined Meeting brought together all National Boards, accreditation authorities and other partners to share information and discuss initiatives, challenges and opportunities nearly a decade after the establishment of the National Scheme.

Participants at the meeting also gained insights from other regulators in public safety as well as experts including Professor Zubin Austin from the Leslie Dan Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Toronto who challenged our thinking about engaging practitioners.

Keynote speaker John Price, Commissioner of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, shared the regulator's emerging lessons from the Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry, drawing connections to the regulation of health practitioners. Another keynote speaker, Ms Gail Furness SC, Counsel Assisting the Royal Commission into Institutional responses to Child Sexual Abuse, also provided her perspectives regarding the Royal Commission's effect on regulators.

#### **Regulatory work plan**

For the remainder of the 2016–20 work plan, the Board confirmed its priority areas of focus will include developing revised continued professional development (CPD) registration standards, subject to prior approval by the COAG Health Council. Development of revised standards will be conducted on a multi-profession basis with other National Boards including the development of self-assessment guidelines. The Board will also conduct CPD focus group sessions to consider barriers to reflective practice.

The Board also intends to review the scope of current endorsements over a number of years and finalise its return to practice explanatory materials and related template forms, following consultation with the profession.

The Board is interested in scoping an initiative in relation to enhancing regulatory outcomes concerning improvements in guidance for eye health and vision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of our community, within an agreed definition of 'cultural safety.'

It will soon consult with AHPRA's Community Reference Group and the profession in relation to a proposed public information paper on the regulation of optometrists and the optometrist-client relationship.

#### **Endorsement for scheduled medicines registration standard and guidelines**

The Board's previous communiqué included information about minor revisions and other administrative corrections to Appendices A and B in the Board's *Guidelines for use of scheduled medicines*. The Board will soon undertake targeted consultation with its key stakeholders.

## Appointment of external members on the List of Approved Persons on hearing panels

The Board has agreed to appoint a new health practitioner member and reappoint four current health practitioner members on its List of Approved Persons (LAP) for hearing panels to consider notification matters that it may refer to those panels. The Board has also approved a new community member, reappointed 11 current cross-profession community members on its LAP for hearing panels and five medical practitioners as cross-practitioner members on its LAP.

## Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board of New Zealand

The Board was pleased to welcome guests, Jayesh Chouhan, Chair, Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board New Zealand (ODOB NZ) and Lindsey Pine, Registrar, ODOB NZ. Their attendance at the Board's meeting was an excellent opportunity for both the Board and ODOB NZ to exchange information on regulatory and legislative developments, issues and initiatives in their respective jurisdictions.

## Consultation on the Accreditation Systems Review final report

The Board provided its views in relation to the final report of the Independent Review of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme for health professionals (NRAS Review) by Professor Michael Woods, commissioned by the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council (AHMAC). A joint National Boards and AHPRA submission will respond to the consultation paper on the recommendations and proposed governance models of the Accreditation Systems Review final report.

## 'Let's talk about it' videos launched

AHPRA has to support the public and registered health practitioners as they go through the notification process.

The video series, called 'Let's talk about it', explains what happens when concerns are raised with the regulator, provides easy to follow information about the notifications process and addresses common questions, so consumers and health practitioners know what to expect when they interact with AHPRA and National Boards.

The videos are:

- [A notification has been made about me](#) features five health practitioners who work within the scheme, directed at health practitioners who have had a notification made about them.
- [I have a concern, am I in the right place?](#) is targeted at members of the public who have a concern but aren't yet sure whether AHPRA is the right place for them to raise it.
- [I have raised a concern with AHPRA](#) provides information for individuals who have just raised a concern with AHPRA.

The videos sit alongside other written resources available on our website, see: [www.ahpra.gov.au/Notifications](http://www.ahpra.gov.au/Notifications).

Practitioners can view the videos on the AHPRA and National Board websites or from their [YouTube](#) and [Vimeo](#) channel and can join the conversation by following AHPRA on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#) and use the hashtag #letstalkaboutit and tag @AHPRA.

## Legislative amendments on mandatory reporting and fake practitioners

The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 (Qld) (the Bill) has now been passed by the Queensland Parliament. The amendments include revisions to the mandatory reporting requirements for treating practitioners and an extension of sanctions for statutory offences.

The changes to the National Law<sup>1</sup> intend to support registered practitioners to seek help for a health issue (including mental health issues). They will also increase the penalties (including the introduction of custodial sentences) for some offences under the National Law, including where a person holds themselves out to be a registered health practitioner when they are not.

AHPRA and National Boards will now work to implement these amendments. This will require working closely with professional bodies, employers and state and territory health departments to help spread the message that practitioners should be supported to seek help about their health issues.

The passing of the Bill in Queensland marks the second set of legislative amendments to the National Law since the start of the National Scheme in 2010.

When in place, the amendments will apply in all states and territories except Western Australia, where mandatory reporting requirements will not change.

Practitioners can read a news item about the amendments on the [AHPRA website](#) or the Bill on the [Queensland Legislation website](#).

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

### Are your contact details up to date?

It is important that your contact details are up to date to receive renewal reminders from AHPRA and information from the Board. You can check your details via the [Login icon](#) at the top right of the AHPRA website. Email accounts need to be set to receive communications from AHPRA and the Board to avoid misdirection to an account junk box.

### Follow AHPRA on social media

Connect with AHPRA on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#) to receive information about important topics for your profession and participate in the discussion.



### 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 details or help with questions about your registration, notifications or other matters relevant to the National Scheme, refer to information published on [www.ahpra.gov.au](http://www.ahpra.gov.au) or [contact AHPRA](#), send an [online enquiry form](#) or call on 1300 419 495.

### Ian Bluntish

#### Chair, Optometry Board of Australia

March 2019

*[The Optometry Board of Australia](#) is the regulator of optometrists in Australia and acts to protect the public by ensuring that suitably qualified and competent optometrists are registered. The Board is responsible for developing registration standards, codes and guidelines for optometrists and managing notifications (complaints)\* about optometrists and optometry students. The Board does this through its powers under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory, and the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme, supported by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA). The Board's work in regulating Australia's optometrists in the public interest is underpinned by [regulatory principles](#), which encourage a responsive, risk-based approach to regulation.*

*\*Except in NSW and Qld which have co-regulatory arrangements.*