

Communiqué

The 58th meeting of the Optometry Board of Australia (the Board) was held on 27 November 2014 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.

2014 Revised guidelines for use of scheduled medicines

The Board formally approved an amended 2014 Guidelines for use of scheduled medicines (the guidelines) on 27 November 2014. This followed a meeting held on 24 November 2014 in collaboration with the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (RANZCO) and the Australian Society of Ophthalmologists (ASO) where it was agreed to modify the March 2013 *Guidelines for use of scheduled medicines* in response to a long-standing legal matter. The Board communicated with all registered optometrists following the release of the revised guidelines on the 8 December 2014.

Under the revised guidelines, optometrists can assess patients for glaucoma, make an initial diagnosis and start treatment when that is in the patient's best interests. Optometrists must provide a referral to an ophthalmologist about glaucoma treatment within four months of initiating treatment or earlier if indicated by a change in the patient's condition.

The revised guidelines are published on the [Policies, codes and guidelines](#) page. Also published is a document that shows how the March 2013 guidelines have been modified, a [FAQ and fact sheet](#).

Appointment for the accreditation of CPD activities

The Optometry Board of Australia and AHPRA announced the appointment of Optometry Australia (OA) as the preferred provider to manage the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) accreditation function for the optometry profession on behalf of the Board. A stringent and independent review process to ensure that all considerations pertinent to the optometry profession were carefully evaluated. Currently, optometrists must complete a minimum of 80 points of CPD activities over two registration periods. This can be met by undertaking accredited, non-accredited activities or a combination of both, as described in the Board's [Guidelines for continuing professional development for endorsed and non-endorsed optometrists](#).

Introduction of registration standard for general registration for initial applicants effective 1 December 2014

The new [registration standard for initial applicants](#) is effective from 1 December 2014 as all of the optometry courses of study from 2013 onwards include therapeutics as part of the undergraduate degree. A letter was sent to individual optometrists with general registration who are not endorsed for scheduled medicines to inform or remind them of the notation to be applied to their general registration on 1 December 2014 that states 'The optometrist is not qualified for endorsement for scheduled medicines and is not able to prescribe Schedule 4 medicines for the treatment of conditions of the eye.' Optometrists can apply to have this notation removed from their registration by completing an approved or equivalent qualification that leads to endorsement for scheduled medicines.

Reminder: renewal of registration for 2014/15 and registration certificate

The deadline for optometrists to renew their registration passed on 30 November 2014. Optometrists who forgot to renew their registration by this date are able to submit a [Fast Track application](#) form.

Due to introduction of the registration standard for general registration for initial applicants on 1 December the hard copy registration certificates have been delayed. The certificates are scheduled to be sent out and arrive in December. For those registrants who printed a certificate from the online service prior to 1 December and hold general registration without an endorsement for scheduled medicines your hard copy registration certificate will include a notation that states 'The optometrist is not qualified for endorsement for scheduled medicines and is not able to prescribe Schedule 4 medicines for the treatment of conditions of the eye.'

If you do not renew your registration by 31 December (end of the one month late period), your registration will lapse in accordance with the National Law and your name will be removed from the national register.

If you wish to keep practising and do not renew registration by 31 December, you must submit a fast track application for registration. Fast track application forms are available on the Board website or by phoning the Customer Service Team on 1300 419 495 during January.

If submitting a fast track application, you cannot practise until your application is processed and your registration details are updated on the national register.

Strengthening international criminal history checks

From early 2015, National Boards and AHPRA will implement a new procedure for checking the criminal history of international applicants when they apply for registration. The new approach aims to protect the public without unnecessarily delaying the registration process for applicants.

For more information, please read the media release on the AHPRA website.

Planning 2015/16

The Board has commenced their planning for the 2015/16 year by starting the development of a strategic regulatory work plan to guide the work of the Board over this period. Once finalised the revised strategic regulatory work plan will be included in the Health Professions Agreement it maintains with AHPRA and will be published on the Board's website.

Annual report

The 2014 Annual report of AHPRA and the National Boards reporting on the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme has now been published.

The 2014 annual report is a comprehensive record of the National Scheme for the 12 months ending 30 June 2014. This year for the first time, local summaries of the work in regulating health practitioners in every state and territory have been published. These summaries and the 2014 annual report are published on the [AHPRA 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 detail or 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

22 December 2014