

Chair's Report

The inaugural National Board for the optometry profession has now completed its first term. I would like to thank all the Board members for their dedicated efforts in moving the Board from the initial transition period into the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme to one of establishment with maturing processes and systems.

The Board has been reappointed with only one change and I would like to thank departing community member Judith Dickstein for her considerable contributions during the past three years. I also welcome Adrienne Farago from Darwin as the new community member.

As we approach the third anniversary of the National Scheme in 2013, the Board has started a review of its existing registration standards and guidelines, and turned its attention to the quality of our services and the role of regulatory policy in ensuring a quality standard of eye health care for the Australian people. The Board will consult widely on proposed amendments to standards or guidelines. I would encourage you to participate in these consultations on how the profession is regulated. Each consultation will be published on the Board's website in the [News](#) section.

The Board has been working closely with AHPRA to increase the financial transparency of the National Scheme. The Health Professions Agreement that both parties sign is now published on the Board's website. This will be updated annually with each new version.

One of the main focuses in this newsletter is the audit of compliance that the optometry, pharmacy and chiropractic professions will be participating in alongside registration renewal this year. Optometrists will be audited for compliance against the Board's registration standards: criminal history, professional indemnity insurance, recency of practice and continuing professional development. This newsletter provides a broad overview of the process. If you are

selected for audit, AHPRA will notify you individually and provide you with clear instructions on what evidence you need to provide.

As always, I would encourage you to ensure that AHPRA has your correct contact details so that you can receive important notices and updates from the Board and AHPRA.

Communicating with optometrists is important to the Board and, at the same time, we are conscious not to overwhelm your email inboxes. The Board will send you two e-newsletters a year and AHPRA will send you e-mails around registration renewal time. In between these times, the Board publishes a monthly communiqué on its website after each of its meetings. I would encourage you to read these on a monthly basis to keep up to date.

Colin Waldron

Chair, Optometry Board of Australia

Registration renewal

The annual registration renewal process is about to commence.

Practitioners are urged to check that contact details provided to AHPRA are up to date, including current email addresses, in order to receive this year's registration renewal reminders.

Optometrists' renewal of registration is due by 30 November 2012.

AHPRA will send email reminders to renew to all optometrists for whom an email address is known. Look out for these email reminders as confirmation that online renewal of registration is open.

Hardcopy letters reminding practitioners of their responsibility to renew will be sent to all practitioners who do not renew after the first email prompt.

To date, AHPRA has email addresses for more than 90% of registered optometrists, which enables direct and effective communication about important issues, such as renewal of registration. Providing email details reduces the need and reliance on hardcopy letters and forms, which has an overall benefit of reducing the National Board's production, printing and postage costs.



Renewal declarations

Registration renewal is the time when an optometrist is required to declare that, among other things, he or she has met the Board's requirements as listed in the registration standards: criminal history, professional indemnity insurance, recency of practice and continuing professional development (CPD). The following information aims to assist practitioners when they complete the recency of practice and CPD declarations.

Recency of practice

You will need to declare whether you have met the Board's recency of practice standard for the period 1 December 2011 to 30 November 2012.

If you have practiced 150 hours over the past twelve months, OR 450 hours over the past three years, tick 'yes'.

If you have not met these minimum requirements then you need to tick 'no'. The length of time you are away from any practice will determine what other information you need to attach with the renewal application form. This is described in requirement #3 of the Board's *Recency of practice registration standard*.

The Board has also published an [information sheet](#) to assist optometrists develop a professional development plan and return to practice plan.

Continuing professional development

The Board has recently consulted on a revised registration standard for continuing professional development (CPD). This standard will allow for the accumulation of CPD requirements over two consecutive registration periods. This standard has been submitted to the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council for approval. Ministers will consider this at their next meeting.

For the purpose of registration renewal this year, the existing registration standard and guidelines *still* apply so optometrists will need to answer the same question as they did last year.

During your preceding period of registration, have you met the Board's Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements, or do you have a plan in place to complete them by the end of the next registration period?

If you answered this question last year on the basis of having a plan in place then you need to ensure that you have completed all the requirements for the 2011 registration period.

The Board will communicate the outcome of the Ministers' decision and how this affects individual practitioners as soon as the Board is formally notified of the decision.

Standards compliance audit

All optometrists and other health practitioners registered under the National Law are required to comply with a range of registration standards. The registration standards are developed by each National Board after wide-ranging consultation and must be approved by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council. All optometrists must comply with the relevant registration standards for English language, criminal history, recency of practice, continuing professional development and professional indemnity insurance.

AHPRA is currently developing an auditing framework to test compliance with standards through a practitioner audit project. As part of this large program of work, a pilot was conducted with the pharmacy profession earlier this year. A second phase of the pilot is being run at registration renewal this year with the optometry, pharmacy and chiropractic professions.

In conjunction with the Board, a steering committee will work to deliver a set of findings and recommendations that will eventually be used to develop a robust auditing framework that can be used across all 14 National Boards. This will be developed through analysis of data and process information from the both phases of the pilot.

This second phase will begin in October 2012 and run for approximately three months. Optometrists will be randomly selected when they apply to renew their registration for the 2012-13 period. This will apply to both paper and online renewal applications. Those selected to participate will be audited for compliance against the Board's registration standards: criminal history, professional indemnity insurance, recency of practice and continuing professional development.

Feedback from the pilot will inform the set-up of the auditing framework for use by other National Boards from 2013/14. The timing of further rollout will be informed by the findings of the second phase of the pilot.

There will be an information pack sent to those selected for the audit with additional information available on the AHPRA website www.ahpra.gov.au.

Consultations

Draft registration standard for limited registration for teaching or research

The Board is undertaking a public consultation on its proposed draft *Registration standard for limited registration for teaching or research*. The registration standard has been drafted to describe the requirements for limited registration for teaching or research. The registration standard sets out both the initial and ongoing requirements.

Please provide feedback by email to optomconsultation@ahpra.gov.au by close of business on 23 October 2012.

Find a copy of the consultation paper in the [News](#) section of the Board's website.

Guidelines for the prescription of ocular appliances

In 2013, the Board will conduct a review of Board-specific registration standards and guidelines. One of the documents to be reviewed will be the Board's *Guidelines for the prescription of ocular appliances*.

In preparation for the review, the Board is interested in hearing from the wider profession on the current effectiveness of these guidelines and what if anything needs to be improved.

The Board welcomes any comments on this matter. Comments and feedback can be forwarded to optomconsultation@ahpra.gov.au, with 'Guidelines for the prescription of ocular appliances' in the subject line, up to 15 October 2012.

Social media policy

The Optometry Board and the other 13 National Boards in the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (National Scheme) will release a consultation paper on a social media policy in October/November 2012.

A draft of the social media policy was recently released as a preliminary consultation paper to targeted stakeholders for initial feedback, ahead of a wider public release. The preliminary consultation process aimed to 'road test' the initial draft to weigh operational impact, issues or initial concerns.

The early draft generated a lot of interest, especially on social media. Feedback was monitored closely and taken into account in the refinement of the draft social media policy before its release for public consultation.

When the formal public consultation process opens, the Board encourages feedback from registered optometrists and members of the community. The public consultation document will be published in the *News* section of the Board website.

Funding agreement published

The Board and AHPRA last month increased public access to financial information about the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme.

In the interests of transparency and accountability, the Board and AHPRA published for the first time the Health Profession Agreement that outlines the services that AHPRA will provide to the Board in 2012/13.

Under the National Law, the Board and AHPRA work in partnership to implement the National Scheme, each with specific roles, powers and responsibilities set down in the National Law.

Optometry Board of Australia Chair, Colin Waldron, said the Board was accountable to the profession and the community.

'We are responsible for using practitioners' registration fees wisely in regulating the profession in the public interest,' Mr Waldron said.

'The Board is pleased to provide more detailed information about how registration fees are allocated to regulate the profession in Australia,' he said.

The published agreement is available under the *About* tab of the Board's website.

What's new from the Board?

Since the release of its last e-newsletter, the Board has published the following documents on its website:

- *Registration standard for general registration for initial applications* (comes into effect 1 December 2014)
- *Registration standard for limited registration for postgraduate training or supervised practice* (s66)
- *Limited registration for postgraduate training or supervised practice - Fact Sheet*
- *Supervision guidelines for optometrists* (and associated templates)
- *Information sheet for optometrists returning to practice or significantly changing their scope of practice* (revised)

Find these publications in the *Policies, Codes and Guidelines* section of the Board's website www.optometryboard.gov.au

Registered workforce snapshot

New Board data show there are 4,568 optometrists registered in Australia. Last month the Board published the second of its quarterly data profiling Australia's optometry workforce, including a number of statistical breakdowns about registrants such as state/ territory (see table next page), age and gender by registration type.

The National Registration and Accreditation Scheme requires that information about every registered health practitioner in Australia is published on a single national register of practitioners. As a result, it is now possible to produce accurate reports on the number of practitioners registered in each profession in Australia. It is one of the significant added values of national registration and is of enormous value for workforce planning and to help improve access to health services.

Find the Optometry Board of Australia's statistics in the *About* section of its website.



Optometrists: state and territory by registration type, June 2012

State	General	Limited	Non-practising	Total	% by state
		Teaching or research			
ACT	68	-	-	68	1.49%
NSW	1,510	-	35	1,545	33.82%
NT	28	-	-	28	0.61%
QLD	919	-	7	926	20.27%
SA	233	-	1	234	5.12%
TAS	83	-	-	83	1.82%
VIC	1,123	1	21	1,145	25.07%
WA	359	-	4	363	7.95%
Not stated	153	-	23	176	3.85%
Total	4,476	1	91	4,568	100%

Graduate online applications to open in October

AHPRA will soon be calling for online applications for registration from health practitioner students completing National Board-approved programs of study at the end of 2012.

From October, students of optometry will be urged to apply for registration as a health practitioner four to six weeks before their course ends using AHPRA’s online graduate registration application service.

All applications require students to return some supporting documents to AHPRA.

The online service builds on the early application process put in place at the end of 2010 for graduating students. The number of students using the online graduate registration application service continues to grow each semester.

AHPRA releases 2012-13 business plan and service charter

The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) recently released a service charter and its 2012-13 business plan, outlining how AHPRA will achieve future goals in implementing the national regulation scheme for health professionals.

AHPRA chief executive Martin Fletcher said the 2012-13 business plan illustrated how AHPRA would focus its efforts and work with National Boards to protect the public and facilitate access to health services over the coming year.

The service charter sets out the values that guide AHPRA; the standards of service health practitioners, the public, employers and other stakeholders can expect; and the steps to be taken if these standards are not met.

‘AHPRA’s 2012-13 business plan and service charter provide the public and health practitioners with a window into what we do, how our efforts are focused and how we can be held accountable,’ Mr Fletcher said.

The service charter, developed in consultation with health profession representatives, the community, National Boards and AHPRA staff, will be reviewed in 12 months.

Both documents are published on the AHPRA website www.ahpra.gov.au.

Contacting the Board

The Optometry Board of Australia and AHPRA may be contacted by telephone on 1300 419 495.

More information on the Board is available at www.optometryboard.gov.au and more information on AHPRA is available at www.ahpra.gov.au.

An online enquiry form is available on both websites under *Contact Us*. Mail correspondence can be addressed to: Colin Waldron, Chair, Optometry Board of Australia, GPO Box 9958, Melbourne Vic 3001.

