

Chair's report

This is a historic year for Australian and world optometry. In Hobart, we celebrated the centenary of the first optometry regulatory legislation passed in the world. This significant event took place in Tasmania in 1913.

The occasion was marked in 2013 by a celebratory dinner – a fitting celebration for a small state that always punches well above its weight as a leader in health reform. See the [article](#) in this newsletter for further details.

In June, I attended the Annual Meeting of the Association of Regulatory Boards of Optometry (ARBO) in San Diego, USA. Australia was inducted as the 60th member and the first outside the United States, Guam, Puerto Rico and Canada.

This is an important connection which assists the Board to ensure that Australian optometric regulation is up to date with international developments and trends. This is particularly relevant with the growing emphasis on ensuring that all health professionals maintain high competency levels for re-registration in their profession.



ARBO Annual Meeting, San Diego: L to R Colin Waldron, Lisa Fennell (Executive Director, ARBO), Michael Olson (President, ARBO)

General registration standard for new registrants – requirement for therapeutic endorsement qualifications

In December 2014, the *Registration standard for general registration for initial applications* will require all applicants to have therapeutic endorsement qualifications to obtain general registration. We expect that the majority of registrants will have therapeutic qualifications and endorsement by 2020.

The Board encourages all optometrists currently without endorsement to consider the benefits of obtaining this further qualification.

Scheduled medicines guidelines

There is currently legal action in the Queensland Supreme Court with the Board and the Australian Society of Ophthalmologists and The Royal Australian and New

Zealand College of Ophthalmologists, in relation to the *Optometry guidelines for use of scheduled medicines*.

To protect the integrity of the legal process, the Board is not making further comment at this time.

Communication – Board objectives

The Board's major means of communicating with registrants and the public is its website: www.optometryboard.gov.au. We encourage you to visit the website regularly.

The Board's communications objectives are to:

- support audit, renewals and the online graduate application service for registration
- support new initiatives and Board priorities
- continue to build direct lines of communication between the Board and registrants
- increase awareness of the role and importance of the Board in:
 - > protecting the public from unsafe practice
 - > facilitating workforce mobility and access to health services, and
- support the Board's reputation as a robust, capable, fair and transparent regulator.

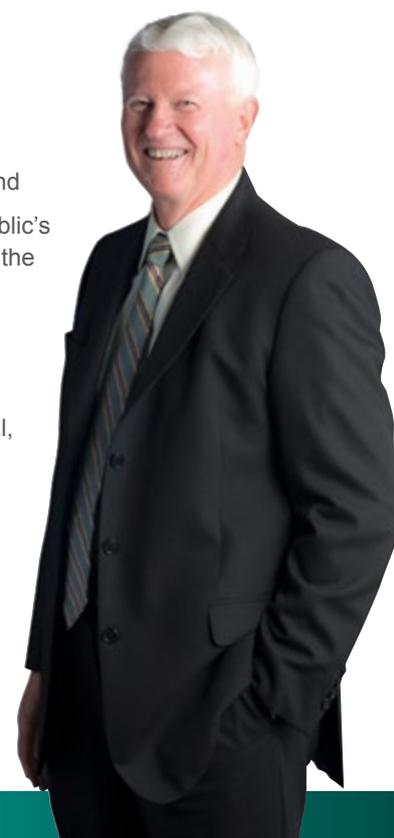
The Board's approach to communication is underpinned by:

- transparency, honesty and openness
- respect for fairness and due process
- integrity, trustworthiness, respect, credibility
- timeliness
- accuracy and consistency
- commitment to two-way communication
- stakeholder engagement, and
- commitment to act in the public's interest for the protection of the public.

Please read on as there is important information for you in this newsletter. This includes advice about registration renewal, the 2013 workforce survey for optometry, the impending audit, and graduate applications.

Colin Waldron

Chair, Optometry Board of Australia



Tasmania celebrates the centenary of optometry registration

A Centenary of Optometry Registration dinner was held in Hobart on 23 August. The dinner was organised by the Tasmanian State Division of the Optometrists Association Australia in conjunction with the OAA Annual 'Tasmanian Lifestyle Congress IX'. Tasmania was the first state to register optometrists in Australia and as such was a leader in health reform, as it is today.

The assembled optometrists and friends listened to a truly noteworthy address from our guest speaker, Associate Professor Daryl Guest, Clinic Director, University of Melbourne EyeCare (UME), Department of Optometry and Vision Sciences. Daryl is Chair of OCANZ and a Tasmanian himself.



Assoc. Prof. Daryl Guest, Chair, OCANZ

In addition, we were privy to remarkable and entertaining recollections from John Rees, Keith Mackriell and Brian Sims. John and Brian are past members of the Tasmanian Board of the Optometry Board of Australia and OAA life members. Keith is the former long-time CEO of OAA Tasmania, an ABC journalist and the author of a history of Tasmanian optometry.

Practitioner audit

AHPRA recently ran a pilot program that audited health practitioners against the standards that practitioners must meet to become and remain registered. The goal of the audit pilot was to develop and test the systems and materials that will be rolled out across the professions in the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (National Scheme).

The second phase of the pilot included conducting audits for the optometry profession on behalf of the National Board. The Board recently approved the publication of a report on this audit pilot, which will be posted to the website soon.

The findings from the pilot resulted in a number of key recommendations, including to further refine supporting information and materials to ensure the audit requirements are clearly articulated, fair and transparent, and user friendly for the practitioner.

The Board looks forward to continuing to work in close partnership with the professional association to ensure that practitioners have access to clear and consistent information on future audit campaigns.

2013 workforce survey for optometry

The Board recently considered and approved a revised 2013 workforce survey for optometry, which optometrists will be asked to complete at the time that they renew their registration.

Health Workforce Australia (HWA) regularly conducts workforce data collection across a range of health professions. The surveys aim to obtain the information required by HWA for workforce planning purposes. The workforce questionnaires collect the agreed minimum data requirements for health workforce statistics and maintain consistency across the different professions.

While it is not mandatory to complete the Workforce Survey, we encourage you to do so. This important data assists with developing a profile of optometrists and their work activities, which can then be considered in workforce planning and policy development activities, and future workforce modelling.

REMINDER: 2013 renewal due soon

Optometrists' registration is due for renewal **by 30 November 2013**. We urge you to provide up-to-date email contact details to AHPRA so you don't miss the reminders to renew.

Look out for your renewal reminders from AHPRA. Online renewal is now open. If you do not want to renew your registration to keep practising you can simply ignore the reminders from AHPRA or go online to 'opt out' of renewing. Using the 'opt out' service puts a stop to renewal reminders.

Renew online, on time

Make sure you renew your registration on time. The quickest and easiest way to do this is [online](#) (93.1 per cent of optometrists used this secure service last year).

Renewal applications received by AHPRA **after 30 November** will incur an additional late fee. If you haven't renewed by one month after 30 November 2013, your registration will lapse. This means you must apply again for registration and will **not be able to practise** until your registration application has been finalised.

FAQ about renewal can be found on the Board website under [Registration renewal](#).

Graduate applications

AHPRA is now calling for online applications for registration from students who are in their final year of an approved program of study.

Optometry students who will be completing studies at the end of 2013 are urged to apply for registration four to six weeks before completing their course. An email to individuals on the Student Register urging them to apply early and online will be sent by AHPRA on behalf of the National Board.

Applications can also be made by completing a [paper application form](#). All applications, online or in hard copy, require students to post some supporting documents to AHPRA. Optometry students are encouraged to read the information on AHPRA's website under [Graduate applications](#).

Graduates must meet the Board's [registration standards](#) and need to be a registered optometrist before they can start practising. New graduates are registered and eligible to start working as soon as their name is published on the national register of practitioners.

Snapshot of the profession

The National Board has analysed its registration data and produced a number of statistical breakdowns about registrants to share with the profession and community. The Board shares these breakdowns regularly.

The Board's latest quarterly data update shows there are 4,635 registered optometrists in Australia: see Table 1. This is an increase of eight practitioners since the last update in March 2013. Of these registrants, 122 are non-practising.

NSW has the highest number of registrants at 1,589, with Victoria the next highest at 1,199 and Qld at 916.

Table 1 – Optometrists: state and territory by registration type (June 2013)

	General	Non-practising	Total	% By State
ACT	74		74	1.6%
NSW	1,547	42	1,589	34.28%
NT	27		27	0.58%
QLD	904	12	916	19.76%
SA	239	1	240	5.18%
TAS	81		81	1.75%
VIC	1,158	41	1,199	25.87%
WA	367	8	375	8.09%
Not Stated	116	18	134	2.89%
Total	4,513	122	4,635	

Table 2 shows the profession by gender by state and territory, with 2,285 women (2,222 practising) and 2,350 men (2,291 practising) registered as at June 2013.

Table 2 – Optometrists: gender by state and territory by registration type (June 2013)

	State	General	Non-practising	Total Count	% By Sex By State
Female	ACT	39		39	1.71%
	NSW	818	18	836	36.59%
	NT	15		15	0.66%
	QLD	421	5	426	18.64%
	SA	105	1	106	4.64%
	TAS	27		27	1.18%
	VIC	595	22	617	27.0%
	WA	152	6	158	6.91%
	Not Stated	50	11	61	2.67%
	Sub total	2,222	63	2,285	49.3%
Male	ACT	35		35	1.49%
	NSW	729	24	753	32.04%
	NT	12		12	0.51%
	QLD	483	7	490	20.85%
	SA	134		134	5.7%
	TAS	54		54	2.3%
	VIC	563	19	582	24.77%
	WA	215	2	217	9.23%
	Not Stated	66	7	73	3.11%
	Sub total	2,291	59	2,350	50.7%
Total	4,513	122	4,635		

A total of 1,499 optometrists (one third) have endorsement for scheduled medicines, with the largest number in Victoria: see Table 3.

Table 3 – Optometrists: endorsement type by state/territory (June 2013)

	Scheduled Medicines
ACT	22
NSW	312
NT	9
QLD	256
SA	95
TAS	54
VIC	636
WA	98
Not Stated	17
Total	1,499

For further details, visit the [About > Statistics](#) section of the Board's website.

News from AHPRA and the National Boards

Notifications guides published

In June, AHPRA published new guides for health practitioners and the community about how notifications are managed in the National Scheme. The [guide for practitioners](#) and a series of fact sheets explain to practitioners what happens when AHPRA receives a notification on behalf of a National Board. The information complements the direct correspondence that individuals receive if a notification is made about them.

The practitioners' guide clearly explains what happens after a concern has been raised about a health practitioner, who decides what happens, how AHPRA works with health complaints entities (on behalf of the Board) and what practitioners can expect from those processes.

AHPRA has also developed a guide for the community about making a notification about a health practitioner. This guide for notifiers, [Do you have a concern about a health practitioner? A guide for people raising a concern](#), will be an early focus for feedback from the newly established Community Reference Group for AHPRA and the National Boards.

Both guides are published online on the AHPRA and National Boards' websites in a wholly revised section on [complaints and notifications](#).

Community Reference Group update

The newly established Community Reference Group had its first meeting in June 2013. This is the first time a national group of this kind, with a focus on health practitioner regulation, has been established in Australia.

The group has a number of roles, including providing feedback, information and advice on strategies for building better knowledge in the community about health practitioner regulation, but also advising National Boards and AHPRA on how to better understand, and most importantly, meet, community needs. Members are listed on the [Community Reference Group Members page](#) and communiqués from the group's meetings are published on the [Communiqués page](#) after each of its meetings.

Professions Reference Group update

The Professions Reference Group was set up in 2012. It is made up of representatives of the professional associations for the professions included in the National Scheme, including optometry, with participation from AHPRA's CEO and senior staff. Quarterly meetings provide an opportunity for AHPRA to brief the professions about its work and for the professions to ask questions about emerging issues relevant to regulation. The group also provides expert advice to AHPRA in developing a range of information for practitioners, such as the recently published [notifications guide and fact sheets](#).

By working with the group, AHPRA has also been able to establish a practitioner consultative group, made up of individual practitioners nominated by their professional association who are willing to provide feedback on proposals and systems improvements, to inform change and improve services ahead of large-scale implementation.

Regulator logos on practitioner websites

Since implementation of the National Scheme, some practitioners have sought permission to reproduce AHPRA's logo or their profession's National Board logo on their business website.

AHPRA and the National Boards have a strict logo use policy and rarely grant permission for their logos to be used by third parties.

The roles of AHPRA and the National Boards in the National Scheme make it inappropriate for either party to endorse, or be perceived to be endorsing, individuals and organisations; their products or services.

Practitioners who have reproduced the AHPRA or a National Board logo on their business website should remove it and consider publishing a text link to www.ahpra.gov.au, advising that their registration to practise can be confirmed by checking the national register of practitioners.

Keep in touch with the Board

- Visit www.optometryboard.gov.au for registration standards, codes, guidelines and FAQ.
- Lodge an enquiry form via the website by following the Enquiries link on the bottom of every page.
- For registration enquiries, call 1300 419 495 (from within Australia) or +61 3 8708 9001 (for overseas callers).
- Address mail correspondence to: Colin Waldron, Chair, Optometry Board of Australia, GPO Box 9958, Melbourne, VIC 3001.

