

Communiqué

The 49th meeting of the Optometry Board of Australia (the Board) was held on 27 February 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.

Revised guidelines for advertising, mandatory notifications and social media policy

The Board, together with the other National Boards, recently published the following revised and new common codes and guidelines, which will come into effect in mid-March 2014:

- *revised Guidelines for advertising regulated health services*
- *revised Guidelines for mandatory notifications, and*
- *new Social media policy.*

Registered optometrists need to familiarise themselves with these documents to ensure their practice meets the Optometry Board's expectations when they come into effect.

The guidelines and policy are common across all National Boards and apply to all registered health practitioners. National Boards consulted widely late last year on the draft versions of the new guidelines and *Social media policy*. The Board reviewed the *Advertising guidelines* and the *Mandatory notifications guidelines* as part of a scheduled review three years into the National Scheme. These are the first set of revised documents to be released this year, with more to come later in 2014. The *Social media policy* is new and has been developed to address emerging social media issues which are not covered in the *Advertising guidelines*.

More information is available on the [Board's website](#).

Audit update

Last year AHPRA conducted pilot audits on behalf of three National Boards, including the Optometry Board of Australia, to develop a nationally consistent approach to auditing health practitioners' compliance with the mandatory registration standards. Unlike the pilot audit that some optometrists previously participated in, the timeframe for the ongoing optometry audit has been separated from the annual registration renewal.

The optometry audit is an important way that the National Board can better protect the public by regularly checking the declarations made during the previous renewal of registration for a random sample of optometrists. The audit will assure the community and National Board that optometrists are meeting the requirements of the registration standards.

Joint meeting with the Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board (ODOB) New Zealand and Optometry Council of Australia and New Zealand (OCANZ)

A joint meeting between the Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board (ODOB) New Zealand, Optometry Council of Australia and New Zealand (OCANZ) and the Optometry Board of Australia was held on 20 February 2014, in Wellington, New Zealand. This provided an opportunity to exchange information about regulation and accreditation. It also allowed the Boards and Council to discuss strategies to strengthen their understanding of the impacts of changes, such as the Optometry Board of

Australia's introduction of the Registration Standard for General Registration for Initial Applications effective in December 2014.

Snapshot of the registered optometry workforce

The Board publishes quarterly data profiling Australia's optometry workforce, including a number of statistical breakdowns about registrants.

The Board's December 2013 data update, which was published on the Board's website in January 2014, shows that there are 4,688 registered optometry practitioners in Australia. Of these, 4,559 hold general registration as an optometrist with 1,617 of those holding endorsement for scheduled medicines, 1 holds limited registration and 128 hold non-practising registration.

More 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 AHRPA on 1300 419 495.

Colin Waldron

Chair, Optometry Board of Australia

29 April 2014