

Communiqué

The 48th meeting of the Optometry Board of Australia (the Board) was held on 19 December 2013 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.

New professional standards for practitioners

The National Board will be publishing revised and new standards, codes and guidelines in 2014.

The first lot of documents will be published in February. They are the:

- revised *Advertising guidelines*
- *Social media policy*
- revised *Mandatory reporting guidelines*, and
- revised *Code of conduct*.

These guidelines, policy and code will come in to effect in March 2014, and all registered health practitioners will need to meet these new standards.

Additional information will also be published in February, explaining the similarities and differences between the current and new standards.

The National Board consulted widely this year on the draft versions of these documents (and continue to consult on other important documents, see the *Consultations* page on the Board website).

Much work has also gone in to making sure that the format and language used in the documents meet plain language requirements, to make it easier to access and understand the important information in them. A series of focus groups tested the way the documents are presented, so that we can choose a design that supports ease of reading and understanding.

[More information about the revised registration standards, codes and guidelines will be published on the AHPRA and National Boards' websites in February.](#)

Registration and Notification Committee

The Board has acknowledged concerns from the Registration and Notification Committee regarding practice standards involving practitioner's supervision arrangements and record keeping.

It is essential for both the supervisor and the supervisee to read and understand the requirements, responsibilities and commitments required for practitioners adhering to a supervision agreement. The [Optometry Supervision guidelines for optometrists](#) are available on the Board's website and clearly outline expectations of each party involved in the supervision process. The Board encourages all parties to carefully consider the guidelines before engaging in a supervision agreement.

The Registration and Notification Committee also expressed a concern about record keeping, in particular the accuracy of and relevant details recorded on patient records. The [Optometry Board Policy on health records](#) lists key points of good practice in maintaining clinical records, and refers to other sources which provide guidance to maintaining good clinical records. There should be a clear explanation of all procedures performed and recommendations given, in order to allow another optometrist to continue treatment.

The Registration and Notification Committee identified that communication between practitioners and their patients remains the most common reason for public notifications to the Board.

Renewal

Registered optometrists were required to renew their registration by the end of November 2013.

If you did not renew by 31 December 2013 your registration has lapsed. Your name will be removed from the [national register of practitioners](#) and you must cease to practise optometry immediately. If you wish to keep practising you must make a new application for registration.

Fast track application forms are available on the Board website under *Forms* or by phoning the AHPRA 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.

An FAQ about renewal is available on the [Board's website](#).

Audit update

AHPRA and the Board will implement a practitioner audit of compliance with registration standards in early 2014. Further information will be published on the AHPRA and Board websites closer to the audit period.

When it is necessary to be registered as an optometrist

The Board revisited the April 2012 guidance statement which provides advice to help optometrists decide whether or not they should be registered. This statement is accessible at: www.optometryboard.gov.au/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 AHPRA on 1300 419 495.

Colin Waldron

Chair, Optometry Board of Australia

9 January 2014