

Communiqué

The 46th meeting of the Optometry Board of Australia (the Board) was held on 24 October 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.

Policy on considering events

The Board has adopted a new policy on considering invitations to attend events. The objective of this policy is to ensure the Board uses consistent criteria when considering invitations.

The policy states that all invitations to members or the Chair of the Board be submitted in writing (letter or email) and be addressed to the Chair.

The Board will then consider the invitation, taking in to account a number of factors, including the potential for actual or perceived conflict of interest and how the activity/event is relevant to the Board's purpose. The Board will only accept an invitation if it meets the policy's criteria and does not create any impression (real or implied) of endorsement or partisanship.

The Board will publish the policy shortly on the Board's website under News.

Planning ahead

The Board had its annual planning session on 23 October 2013 and will now start developing and working to an annual work plan, consistent with the strategic directions of AHPRA and the Board.

Renewal

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

Optometrists who have not yet renewed have received both email and hardcopy reminders. Under the National Law¹, those who do not renew their registration within one month of their registration expiry date must be removed from the Register of Optometrists. The Board encourages optometrists who wish to continue to practise and who are due to renew, to do so online and by 30 November 2013.

Registration standards, codes and guidelines for review

The Board developed registration standards, codes and guidelines for the start of the National Scheme on 1 July 2010. These standards, codes and guidelines were scheduled for review at least every three years.

Registration standards

All National Boards have registration standards that define the requirements that applicants for registration and registrants need to meet to be registered.

¹ The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law).

The National Boards will soon be undertaking public consultation on standards outlining:

- the **English language skills** necessary for an applicant for registration to be suitable for registration, and
- matters to be considered in deciding whether an individual's **criminal history** is relevant to the practice of optometry.

Preliminary consultation is about to commence soon for the registration standards outlining requirements for:

- professional indemnity insurance, and
- recency of practice.

The registration standards have been restructured and are written in plainer language. The Board has made changes where it received feedback that elements in the standards have not worked as intended.

Common guidelines

Following public consultation, the National Boards are now finalising the following common guidelines:

- revised *Guidelines for advertising*
- proposed *Social media policy*, and
- revised *Guidelines for mandatory notifications*.

The new guidelines will take effect from the date that they are published on the Board's website.

International criminal history checks

The National Law requires that all applicants for registration have a criminal history check. Currently, applicants have an Australian criminal history check and must also sign a declaration disclosing their criminal history in all countries, including Australia. The National Boards are currently consulting on processes for international criminal history checks to assess applications for registration in Australia.

The National Boards are working with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) to refine the requirements for criminal history checks from jurisdictions outside Australia. The Boards first consulted on this issue in 2012.

The options are outlined in the [consultation paper](#) which is available on the Board's website. The consultation closed on 31 October 2013. The current option aims to balance public protection with the need for responsive and timely application and assessment processes for health practitioners seeking registration in Australia.

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

14 November 2013