OPTOMETRY AUSTRALIA

Strategic Future

Proposal Overview

One profession. One voice. One future.

This document walks you through the unification proposal — everything you need to make an informed decision.

This Proposal Overview has been updated and is issued alongside your State Division's Notice of Special General Meeting. Please read this version in full, even if you have read an earlier version.

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PROPOSAL SUMMARY

About This Document.

This Proposal Overview has been prepared by the Boards of the Optometry Australia Federation to assist members in making an informed decision on the proposal to unify the Federation into a single national organisation.

What This Document Is

A summary of the unification proposal prepared by the Boards of all entities in Optometry Australia.

Who It Is For

All members of the five State Divisions of the Optometry Australia Federation.

What Happens Next

Members will vote on this proposal at a Special General Meeting of their State Division. This Proposal Overview has been provided as part of the formal notice of each State Divisions' Special General Meeting.

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HOW THE PROPOSAL WAS DEVELOPED

Built Collaboratively. Validated Independently.

The proposal was developed through a rigorous, multi-year process called the Strategic Future Project, led by a Project Working Group of Presidents, Board representatives and CEOs from every part of the Federation. Before any recommendation was made to members, four independent areas of expert validation confirmed the proposal is legally sound, financially viable and built on strong governance principles.

Governance Design

Constitution and Board composition reflect contemporary governance principles and legal expert advice.

Legal & Tax Structuring

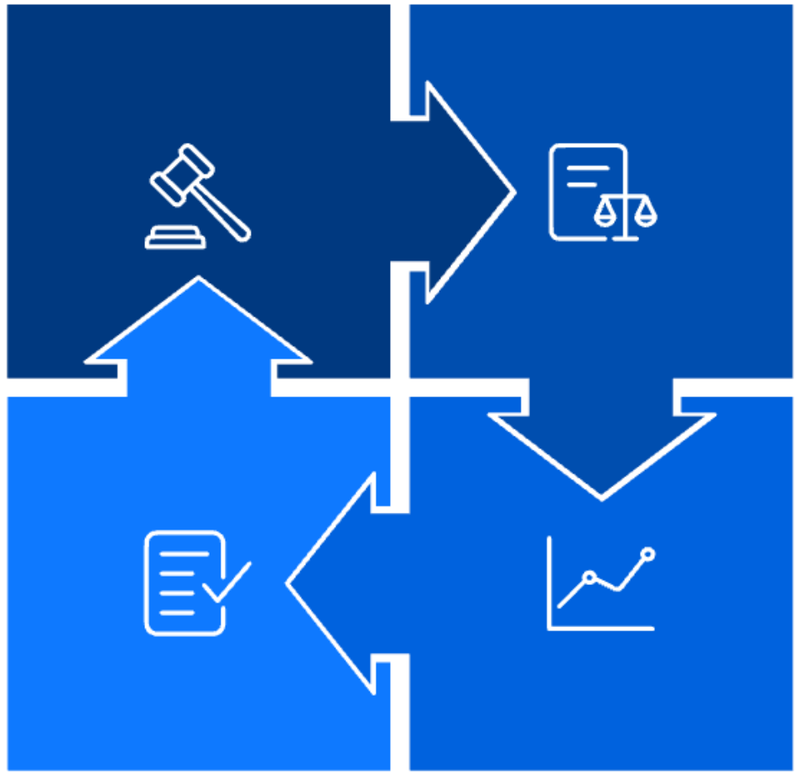
The proposed legal entity and implementation pathway has been validated.

Financial Modelling

Validated as financially viable with significantly lower fees for members.

Due Diligence

Legal and financial due diligence confirmed sound accounting, reliable financial statements, and no material legal risks.



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WHY THIS PROPOSAL MATTERS

Optometry and Healthcare are Evolving, OA Must Too.

Workforce Pressures

Oversupply, burnout and workforce pressures are increasingly reported across the profession.

A Changing Healthcare System

Clinical scope is expanding and patient expectations are rising. At the same time, demand for eye care is growing with Australia's ageing population.

Technology & Industry Transformation

AI, digital health, advanced diagnostics and new service models are reshaping how eye care is delivered.

Evolving Professional Expectations

Younger and increasingly diverse cohorts of optometrists are entering the profession with new expectations around career pathways, professional support and workplace conditions.

Positioning the Voice of Optometry

It is critical that optometry continues to have a strong, unified voice to grow, innovate and lead in Australia's evolving healthcare system.

Why Unification is the Response

A unified national organisation — with a single voice, streamlined governance and direct member representation — is better positioned to respond to every one of these pressures. That is why the Boards of all entities in the Federation are recommending members vote yes.

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OUR JOURNEY

Evolution at OA is Not New. That is a Strength.

Unification is not a sudden shift — it is the natural next step in a journey that has been underway for close to a decade. Each milestone below was deliberate, carefully considered and endorsed by members. Together, they have steadily built the foundations for a single, stronger national organisation. This proposal is the next step in our journey.

2019

Victorian and South Australian State Divisions merged to create Optometry Victoria South Australia.

2023

OVSA and Optometry Tasmania integrated service delivery with the National Body via Service Agreements.

2024

Optometry Queensland and Northern Territory integrated service delivery with the National Body via a Service Agreement.

2026

Following commission of the Strategic Future Project, each of the State Division Boards and the Optometry Australia Board have endorsed the proposal to unify into a new single national organisation. For this proposal to progress, it must be approved by members through a formal vote.

Mid to Late 2026 Onwards

If members vote in favour, OA is unified. One organisation, one board, one voice. Delivering stronger advocacy, lower fees and better support for every Australian optometrist.

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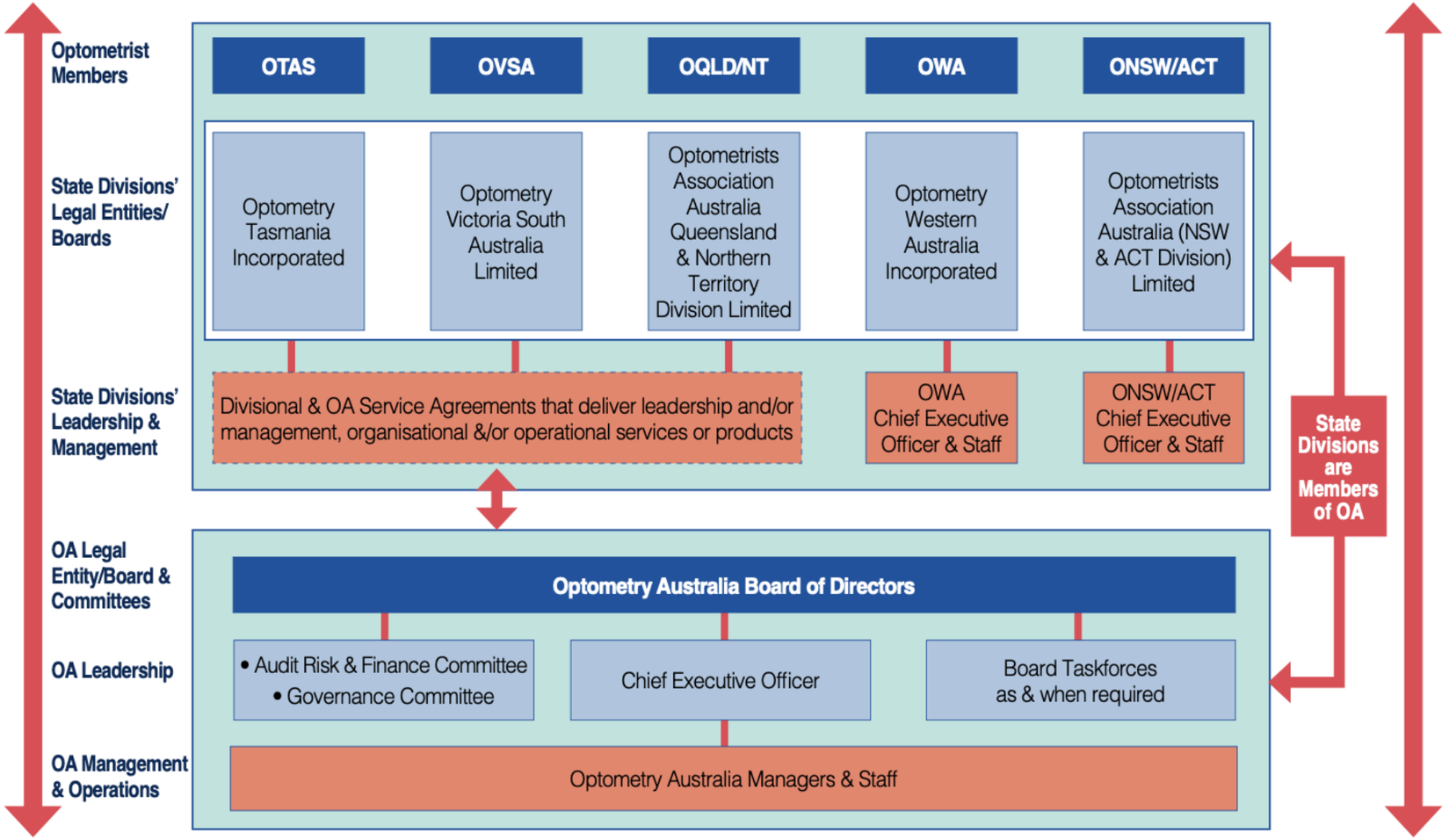
OUR STRUCTURE TODAY

The Current Federated Structure.

Today, the Optometry Australia Federation operates as six separate legal entities, five State Divisions and Optometry Australia Ltd, each with its own Constitution, its own Board, and its own administrative and legal overhead. While this structure has served the profession, it was built for a different time.



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KEY ELEMENTS OF THE PROPOSAL

What Changes.

The current federated structure has served the profession for decades, but it now creates complexity, duplication, rising costs, and a diluted national voice.

	Today	A Unified OA
Legal Structure	Six organisations, six boards, 50 directors, each with its own legal entity and Constitution.	One organisation, one legal entity, one Constitution, one Board with streamlined decision-making.
Membership and Fees	Optometrists are members of their State Division only, with no direct say in the National Body. Membership fees differ in each state.	AHPRA-registered OA members become direct members with a vote in national Board elections and are eligible to stand for election. Nationally consistent and significantly lower membership fees provide better value for members.
Service Delivery	Service models vary across the Federation. Some State Divisions have services delivered by OA, while others operate their own teams. National services are provided to all members, resulting in duplication in areas such as governance, executive leadership and corporate support.	A single, unified team will deliver both local and national services, with staff drawn from existing teams where possible. This reduces duplication while maintaining a strong local presence across Australia.
Board Composition	50 directors across multiple boards. One representative per State Division on the National Board, plus up to 2 co-opted directors.	Single Board of up to 9 Directors: 6 elected by members (one per region), up to 3 appointed by the Board.
Director Terms	Varying approaches across the Federation, including some boards with no maximum term limits.	Member-elected Directors serve 3-year terms, maximum 9 years. Board-appointed Directors serve up to 3-year terms, maximum 9 years. Mandatory 3-year stand-down applies.
Governance Training	Varying and inconsistent requirements across the Federation.	All nominees must have completed a governance course (min. 3 days, AICD or equivalent) or complete within 18 months of election at the organisation's cost.
Member Engagement	State Lead Optometrist roles operate in Tasmania, Victoria, South Australia, and Queensland.	State Lead Optometrist roles will be expanded to WA and NSW. State Leads are a primary point of member engagement, attending local CPD events, conferences, and member activities. They play a key role in sharing member feedback, challenges, opportunities, and insights with the broader organisation.

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KEY ELEMENTS OF THE PROPOSAL

What Gets Better.

Everything members rely on today continues without interruption and in many areas, unification makes it stronger.

CPD & Conferences

CPD including 1 - 2 day state conferences, one national conference and online CPD.

Local Events

Local member engagement events annually.

Insurance

Premium professional indemnity and public liability insurance.

Advocacy

State and Federal advocacy.

Professional Support

Professional support helpline, HR legal support and EAP.

Member Communications

Member communications, journals and clinical resources.

Name & Legacy

The trusted name of Optometry Australia and the legacy built over generations.

State Assets Protected

Every dollar, contract and piece of intellectual property transfers.

Membership Categories

Consistent national categories.

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YOUR GOVERNANCE

You Elect the Board. Every Region Has a Voice.

For the first time in the profession's history, every individual member has the opportunity to directly elect the national Board — not indirectly through State Divisions, but as individual members each with one vote. These rights are not promises. They are written into the Constitution and can only be changed by a 75% special resolution of members. The Board works for you.

Chair and President

During both the Transitional and Permanent Board phases (from November 2027), the Chair must be an Ordinary Member (an AHPRA-registered optometrist), as defined in the Constitution.

6 Elected Directors - One Per Region

Members in each region elect their own director. Regions: NSW/ACT · VIC · QLD · SA/NT · TAS · WA. Elected directors always hold the majority on the Board (6 of up to 9).

Up to 3 Appointed Directors

Appointed through an open, competitive process to bring specialist expertise — such as finance, law or digital health — that strengthens the Board's capability. Appointed Directors can never outnumber Elected Directors, ensuring member-elected voices always hold the majority.

State Advisory Bodies

The Constitution requires the Board to establish a State Advisory Body for every region. These are not optional. They exist to ensure local member knowledge, priorities and concerns are heard at the national level and reflected in decisions that affect every member.

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LEGAL ENTITY

A New Home for a Unified Profession.

THE NEW ENTITY

A new legal entity, currently called **Australian Optometry Ltd (ACN 693 343 645)**, has been created for the purposes of unification. It has not traded.

If members vote in favour of unification, it will:

- Be renamed to **Optometry Australia** – no change to name or branding
- Receive asset and liability transfers from each participating State Division
- Have its Constitution, membership, governance, management and operations structured in accordance with the Proposal Overview

AHPRA-registered optometrists remain eligible for membership under the new structure

HEALTH PROMOTION CHARITY

Australian Optometry Ltd has been registered with the ACNC under the charity sub-types ‘advancing health’ and ‘Health Promotion Charity’ (HPC). The Principal Purpose and Activities outlined in the proposed Constitution reflect charity registration, whilst maintaining delivery of valued member services and supporting the development of new and enhanced offerings.

The Federation already operates as not-for-profit legal entities. This registration is recognition that existing Federation activities meet the relevant criteria for charity registration, and that most of the activities undertaken are of public benefit.

Charity registration is not unusual for allied health associations and medical colleges.

94%
of 18 medical colleges are charities – incl. RANZCO and RACGP

30%
of 30 AHPA* member bodies are charities – incl. The Australian Psychological Society Ltd.

What this means

Services supporting members in their careers, practices and workforce challenges, continue and will be strengthened. Registration as a charity will also provide substantial financial and non-financial benefits.

Financial benefits

Registration as a charity provides substantial financial benefits during implementation and ongoing operations, supporting lower membership fees and long-term sustainability.

Non-financial benefits

Substantial non-financial benefits for ongoing operations, including recognition of the work of the Federation in leading, engaging, uniting and promoting optometry and eye health.

*Allied Health Professions Australia

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YOUR DECISION

The Path to the Member Vote.

Get Informed and Ask Questions

Visit the Strategic Future Member Hub on the Member Portal for information, FAQs and supporting materials. Information sessions and town halls are being held across all State Divisions. Come along, hear from OA leadership and ask anything on your mind.

Formal Notice Issued

This Proposal Overview has been issued as part of the formal notice of Special General Meeting for each State Division. The notice includes details of when your State Division’s Special General Meeting will be held and how to vote.

Attend Your Special General Meeting

A Special General Meeting will be held for each State Division and for Optometry Australia, where the proposal will be formally presented to members.

Cast Your Vote

Each State Division will consider an ordinary resolution. More than 50% of votes cast must be in favour for that Division to participate in unification. You may vote in person, electronically or by post, depending on your State Division's rules. Proxy voting will also be permitted. For unification to proceed, at least four of the five State Divisions must vote in favour.

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THE TRANSITION

What Happens if Members Vote Yes.

The following steps would occur if the relevant number of State Divisions vote in favour of unification.

Your Chance to Step Up

If the vote is successful, all existing State Division members will be invited to nominate for the Director position representing their region. This is your opportunity to help shape the future of the profession. In each region, State Advisory Bodies will be formed, if not already established.

Choose Your Regional Voice on the Board

Candidates for each regional Director position will be confirmed, and members will vote to elect the Director representing their region. Every member gets a say in who leads.

Formation of State Advisory Bodies

State Advisory Bodies will be formed, if not already established. All existing State Division Directors will be invited to become a member of the relevant State Advisory Body for 6 months, with further recruitment to occur via an expression of interest process.

A New Board Takes Shape

The six Directors elected by members will form part of the Transitional Board alongside six Appointed Directors drawn from the current Directors of Optometry Australia. Of these Appointed Directors, four must be optometrists and two are the existing co-opted Directors of Optometry Australia.

The Future Begins

The six Appointed Directors will serve until the Annual General Meeting in November 2027. At that point, the six member-elected Directors continue in office, and the Board will appoint up to three Appointed Directors based on the skills and capabilities the organisation needs to thrive.

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THE CHOICE BEFORE MEMBERS

Your Vote. Your Profession's Future.

Your voice shapes what comes next. Each State Division votes, and if more than half say yes, that Division is in. If a majority of members in a State Division do not support unification while other State Divisions do, that State Division's Board would likely need to consider alternative strategies to remain viable. All State Division Boards and the National Board have endorsed unification, reflecting a shared view that the profession is strongest when all entities within the Federation participate.

✗ Vote No
The Federation Continues as is

- Six separate legal entities and boards continue
- State-based decision-making and advocacy remains split
- No direct member vote in national Board elections
- Membership fees continue to vary by state at a similar level to what they are today
- The current federated structure remains unchanged
- Staffing and service delivery models, and associated duplication, remain unchanged

✓ Vote Yes
Help Build a Stronger Optometry Australia

- You directly elect the new Board — your voice, your choice
- The Chair and President must always be a member-elected director
- Lower, nationally consistent membership fees for every member
- One powerful, unified national advocacy voice for the profession
- State Leads in every region – a local optometrist building relationships with members
- State Advisory Bodies in every region — local voices heard at the national level
- Better support for you — clinically, professionally and personally
- A governance structure built to last and designed to serve members
- Operations and staffing streamlined to remove duplication, enabling lower fees; staff continued to be located across Australia supporting members

This decision belongs to members — not the Boards, not the leadership.

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YOUR NEXT STEPS

We're Here to Support You Every Step.

Whatever you need — information, answers or a conversation — we're here. This is your decision and we want to make sure you feel confident and informed before you vote.

Everything You Need Is in One Place

Visit the Strategic Future Member Hub on the Member Portal for FAQs, supporting materials, key documents and the latest updates — all in one place, updated throughout the process.

We Welcome Your Questions

No question is too small. Speak with your Division President or the National CEO or raise your questions at the National Town Hall or a Drop-in Session hosted by your State Division.

Cast Your Vote

Your vote is your voice. When the time comes, make it count — for yourself, for your colleagues, and for the future of the profession.

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ATTACHMENT A

Proposed Constitution.

Attachment A, Proposed Constitution.

Proposed Constitution of Australian Optometry Ltd, dated 10 March 2026, provided under separate cover.

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