

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Advanced Practice Recognition in optometry: A crucial step towards 2040

**3 April 2024:** As part of Optometry Australia's efforts to realise its preferred future for optometry in 2040, significant steps have been taken towards establishing an Advanced Practice Recognition (APR) program in optometry, aiming to recognise and credential optometrists with demonstrated expertise in particular clinical areas, starting with glaucoma management.

Recognising advanced credentials in areas such as glaucoma management promises to acknowledge the expertise of practitioners. Optometry Australia (OA) hopes that advanced practice recognition will also strengthen collaborative care and envisages a future where Advanced Practitioners will attract interprofessional referrals for complex cases from fellow optometrists, while working closely with ophthalmologists and other specialities. With easy identification through OA's register, collaboration will become seamless, leading to enhanced patient outcomes through multidisciplinary approaches.

Advanced practice recognition offers optometrists an alternative career aspiration and a clear pathway for career progression, making it easier to break through the profession's 'ceiling effect'. This ensures that talent within the optometry field is nurtured and retained, contributing to a vibrant and dynamic workforce.

We believe that the APR program positions optometry to adapt to evolving healthcare landscapes, in close alignment with the forward-looking strategy of Optometry 2040. Recognising the importance of robust governance and structure, OA has undertaken thorough due diligence in developing the program to date. An Advanced Practice Oversight Committee (APOC) has been established to ensure the program's integrity and effectiveness from inception. A Clinical Advisory Committee (CAC) has also been set up, comprising experienced practitioners tasked with defining competencies and experiential criteria for our first clinical area of excellence, glaucoma management. Furthermore, OA is committed to fostering a culture of inclusivity, continuous learning and professional growth within the profession, and with the CAC's support, will develop dedicated resources to support clinicians in developing advanced skills, ensuring equal opportunity for both seasoned professionals and recent graduates.

Optometry Australia's CEO, Skye Cappuccio commented, 'By recognising advanced skills, fostering career progression, and enhancing collaborative care, the APR program not only benefits individual practitioners but should also help ensure timely patient access to needed care.'



Optometry Australia intends to launch a pilot version of the APR program in mid-2024 and following successful completion will be inviting members to apply for advanced practice recognition in glaucoma management; after which programs for other clinical areas of interest will be developed.

**For more information, please contact:**

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Optometry Australia is the peak professional body for optometrists. Representing 85% of registered Australian optometrists, Optometry Australia's focus is to lead and advance the profession of optometry by putting eye-health front and centre of Australian health care.