

MEDIA RELEASE

Optometry Australia welcomes Strengthening Medicare announcement

Tuesday 2 May 2023 – Optometry Australia has commended the Federal Minister for Health, Mark Butler, on the Strengthening Medicare initiatives that have been announced ahead of the 9 May Federal Budget.

CEO of Optometry Australia, Skye Cappuccio said, “The Strengthening Medicare initiatives have the potential to enable optometrists to practise to their fullest scope and to enable the broader rollout of collaborative care models, including in regional and rural areas.

“Optometry Australia welcomes the announcement that a National Scope of Practice Review will assess barriers and incentives for all health professionals to work to their full scope of practice.

“The National Scope of Practice Review needs to consider an enhanced role for optometrists in the management of patients with glaucoma and cataract as well as the treatment of age-related macular degeneration and macular oedema, working with ophthalmologists in team-based care environments.

“With our ageing population and the increased incidence of chronic eye health conditions, it is vital that optometrists are able to practise at their fullest scope and are remunerated accordingly.”

Optometry Australia also welcomed the Minister’s announcement that the Commonwealth will strengthen the role of Primary Health Networks (PHNs) in commissioning allied health and nursing services to improve access to affordable multidisciplinary health care teams, beginning in 2023-24.

“In communities around Australia, innovative optometrists have been demonstrating that they can enhance patient access to more affordable eye care, working collaboratively with ophthalmologists, general practitioners and other health professionals,” added Ms Cappuccio.

“The challenge is to scale these successful collaborative care projects and integrate them into the broader health system in ways that make best use of the highly skilled optometrist workforce.

“Later this month, Optometry Australia is bringing together leading collaborative care optometrists to share their experiences, learn from each other, and provide insights into how their models can be rolled out more broadly across the health system.

“This *Working Together for Better Eye Care* Symposium is very timely and aligns well with Minister Butler’s greater focus on multidisciplinary care teams that increased patient access to care in the community, improve the management of chronic conditions and reduce avoidable hospitalisations.”

“As the peak body for optometrists, Optometry Australia will continue to advocate strongly for an enhanced role for our profession as a vital part of the health care system,” Ms Cappuccio concluded.

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Optometry Australia The influential voice for Optometry

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Optometry Australia is the peak professional body for optometrists. Representing 85% of all registered Australian-based 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.