



Media Release

Embargo until 7am AEST Thursday 10 September 2020

O=MEGA21 goes ahead, World Congress of Optometry shifts to 2023

The World Council of Optometry (WCO) has announced that the 4th World Congress of Optometry (WCO4) will now be held from September 8-10, 2023 in Melbourne, Australia.

Originally scheduled to be held alongside O=MEGA21 in September 2021, COVID-19 impacts have necessitated the postponement – now WCO4 will held in conjunction with O=MEGA23.

O=MEGA21, the largest eyecare and eyewear trade show and conference in the Southern Hemisphere, will proceed as scheduled for an Australian and regional audience from September 2-4 2021 at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Mr. Paul Folkesson, President of the World Council of Optometry, confirmed that the partnership with Optometry Victoria South Australia (OV/SA) and the Optical Distributors and Manufacturers Association of Australia (ODMA) would continue.

‘The global pandemic has meant that we need to delay WCO4, but we do so knowing that this is in the best interests of our stakeholders around the world’, Mr Folkesson said. ‘Because of the strength of our relationship with ODMA and OV/SA we remain certain that Melbourne is the best place to hold WCO4, and as such there will be no need to retender for the Congress. The original Melbourne bid was excellent and all parties have been working together very well in planning for 2021. That momentum will carry us forward to 2023, and we are all very excited to be bringing the WCO Down Under,’ he said.

OV/SA President Elise Pocknee-Clem said ‘There were a number of factors that made the decision to delay the WCO4 component of the 2021 program a simple one for the three Boards’, she said. ‘Many private optometrists from overseas have experienced shutdowns, as we have in Australia, and the economic impact of closures may have a flow on effect limiting practitioners’ ability to travel abroad for CPD next year. Also, significant periods of lockdown and inconsistent ‘opening up’ protocols could impact the capacity of attendees to commit to international travel in the short term. This, and the impact on the university and not-for-profit sectors, and the difficulty in predicting the timing for the ‘end’ of the pandemic meant that we needed to act decisively’.

The Chairman of ODMA, Robert Sparkes, said ‘Optometrists and the ophthalmic optics community are telling me that they extremely eager to resume face to face buying and learning opportunities’, he said. ‘As the market leader, and given that O=MEGA21 is a year away, we wanted to provide certainty that we want to go ahead, and that we’ll do so with the welfare of our attendees in mind. We’re already working with the venue to ensure a really wonderful second iteration of O=MEGA. It has always been our intention to develop the O=MEGA product into a truly regional event for Australia and our near neighbours. Now we have one more opportunity to do that in September 2021 before we open up for the whole world to come and enjoy Australia in 2023.’

O=MEGA21 is presented by ODMA and OV/SA from 2 to 4 September 2021 at Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre.

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