

Optometry Queensland Northern Territory Annual Report

2023-2024



Contents

President’s Report	2
Treasurer’s Report	4
Board of Directors	5
Strategic Pillar 1 (Lead)	6
Strategic Pillar 2 (Engage)	8
Strategic Pillar 3 (Promote)	10
Strategic Pillar 4 (Enduring Organisation)	11

President’s report

Optometry Queensland Northern Territory (OQNT) has had a strong focus on leading and representing the profession throughout the year, whilst continuing to support members locally across Queensland and the Northern Territory and ensuring a sustainable and efficient organisation.

With both a Queensland state election and a Northern Territory election in 2024, there has been a particularly strong focus on political advocacy throughout the year. In alignment with national efforts, we have increased our advocacy for therapeutically endorsed optometrists to be able to prescribe oral therapeutics for the practice of optometry and are hopeful of positive moves in that direction in the near future.

In Queensland, our pre-election platform outlined key initiatives aimed at enhancing eye care accessibility and quality across Queensland, including:

- supporting innovative models of collaborative eye care that enhance timely access for patients with chronic eye health conditions
- placing more optometrists within Queensland’s public hospitals to assist in streamlining patient triaging and co-management

- enhancing the MASS Spectacle Supply Scheme to ensure efficiency and greater coverage and
- enhancing children’s vision screening to ensure timely access to eye care throughout childhood.

We are grateful for the members who have added their voice to our pre-election advocacy efforts.

In the Northern Territory, we’ve developed a collaborative advocacy push in the lead up to the August 2024 election, with RANZCO and other key stakeholders, focused on children’s eye health and calling for a comprehensive early-childhood vision screening program. Our collaborative advocacy will continue post-election to help ensure we realise better eye care access for children across the Territory.

We have also been working closely with local optometrists in a number of regional areas to pursue opportunities to enhance collaboration between optometry and public tertiary services to support better eye health access for local communities and remain optimistic about positive outcomes. We are pleased too, to see increased employment of optometrists with Queensland Health, in line with OQNT’s ongoing advocacy for more effective use of optometrists within the public health system.

We have continued to provide a program of high-quality, local CPD for members and are continuing to evolve our offering to ensure face-to-face educational opportunities that meet member's needs across Queensland and the NT. This year we were pleased to deliver the Australian Vision Convention (AVC), providing an eclectic mix of quality CPD offerings and a sizable and engaging tradeshow on the beautiful Gold Coast. For the first time, we also hosted Cairns Interactive in July 2024, a boutique conference, focused on providing an informative, enjoyable and highly interactive educational experience in the far north of the state. Our conference offerings were complemented by our Member Hub events and a renewed focus on education and engagement events, specifically targeted to our Early Career Optometrists.

It has also been a year of some internal change for OQNT. To ensure a strong sustainable and member-focused organisation into the future, we have undertaken a comprehensive review of our governance processes, including a revision to contemporise our Constitution and align with best practice principles. I thank members who engaged with our Special General Meeting in August 2024, which resulted in the revised Constitution being implemented.

On behalf of the OQNT Board I acknowledge the many years of contribution from former CEO Cathryn Baker, who left her role with the organisation in February 2024, and thank Anita Hobson-Powell and Optometry Australia (OA) who have supported the organisation since.

Based on this positive experience, and to ensure efficient and effective local service deliver for members, the OQNT Board has decided to operationally integrate with OA on a longer-term basis from 1 September 2024. This essentially means that OA will provide all state and Territory-level services to members across Queensland and the Northern Territory, in addition to the national services, like Professional Indemnity Insurance, online CPD and one-to-one professional support, that they were already providing. The OQNT Board continues to have oversight and set strategic direction for the organisation.

It's been my absolute pleasure to step into the President role for OQNT this year and I'm deeply grateful for the ongoing contribution and support of my fellow Directors on the OQNT Board, as well as to the support of our membership.

Collectively the board is looking forward to another productive year delivering for our members. We move into the new year with an updated Strategic Plan, that drives a strong focus on supporting members with all their professional needs, leading the profession toward a robust short and long-term future, enhancing community awareness of the role of optometry and continuing to strengthen our organisation to ensure a sustainable future.

Fiona Moore
President



Treasurer's report

Our financial result for 2023-24 was a surplus after tax of \$249,337. This was largely due to strong membership renewals, an excellent outcome from our Australian Vision Convention (AVC) and robust cost containment. Strong financial performance in 2023/24 supported the Board's decision to maintain membership fees for 2024/25 at the 2023/24 rate.

Capitation fees paid to Optometry Australia (the National organisation) remains our primary expense (\$1,084,069). Services supported by capitation are a strong supplement to local member services and include: a Professional Services Help Line that provides members with free one on one support in all areas of practise and employment; comprehensive Professional Indemnity Insurance; a breadth of free, live and on-demand continuing professional development activities; and, national advocacy related to key issues such as scope of practice and Medicare.

AVC 2024 was held successfully on the Gold Coast in April 2024. This was a hybrid event providing expert education and the opportunity for face-to-face networking. Although the income generated from our 2023-24 events was less than the previous year, it should be noted that costs were reduced accordingly. The profit from this event will be re-invested to further support members and ensure sustainability of the association.

Our investment portfolio once again provided excellent dividends totalling \$18,843. This income was allocated towards operational costs, with the main purpose of the portfolio being ongoing financial security for our organisation. Despite the ups and downs of the market over the last year, our portfolio grew in value by \$31,687 (5.6%).

The valuation of the property, Optometry House, was appropriate to carry on the books. This will be reviewed accordingly in the coming year.

Our annual audit was completed by C&N Audit Services Pty Ltd. The audited financial reports were received, with an unqualified opinion in accordance with the Corporations Act 2001. The Financial Reports for the organisation are available to members on the OQ/NT website, and the auditor will attend the AGM in November 2024.

Natalie Buckman

Treasurer



Board of Directors



Fiona Moore
President



Nancy Atkinson
Vice President



Natalie Buckman
Treasurer



Melinda Toomey
Director



Shuva Bose
Director



Alex Norris
Director



Courtenay Lind
Director



Teagan Lehmann
Director

Strategic Pillar 1: Lead

Lead members and the profession through market and sector evolution and change to achieve the preferred future identified in Optometry 2040.

Advocacy and Collaboration

We have actively advanced advocacy efforts across Queensland and the Northern Territory to strengthen eye health programs and prioritise children’s vision. In Queensland, our focus has been on promoting the adoption of collaborative care models and securing expanded investment in children’s vision screening programs. Advocacy aligned with our Queensland election platform has included meetings with the Chief Allied Health Officer and Shadow Minister for Health and we were proud to share formal responses to our election platform from all major parties with members in October 2024.

We also supported members to engage and advocate for optometrists, optometry, and community eye health in the lead up to the State Election, ensuring that eye health and vision care were on the agenda and resulting in an optometry practice visit by the then-Health Minister during the campaign. We welcomed progress through the Visiting Optometrists Scheme (VOS), with the endorsement of a needs assessment and activity plan for 2024-25 that anticipates increased outreach services due to higher federal funding and we look forward to continuing to engage with key decision makers regarding changes to the Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme – Spectacle Supply Scheme to address accessibility and administrative challenges raised by members and to further embed optometry and optometrists within Queensland Health.



In the Northern Territory, we worked closely with key stakeholders, including RANZCO, the Brien Holden Foundation, and The Fred Hollows Foundation, to establish a joint advocacy push leading up to the NT election. This collaborative platform centred on the need for comprehensive vision screening for NT pre-schoolers, addressing a critical gap in early detection of childhood eye conditions. This area of advocacy, alongside other key issues will be a key element of our future advocacy and engagement with key decision makers in the Northern Territory, informed by members via an engagement visit to Darwin in October 2024.

Our commitment to supporting the next generation of optometrists continues through partnerships with QUT, including commitments to the delivery of an advocacy placement with the OA team for students in 2025 and an expanded scholarship program for regional and rural placements. These efforts reflect our unwavering commitment to ensuring a robust future for the profession and improving access to and equity in eye care outcomes for patients across Queensland and the Northern Territory.



Strategic Pillar 2: Engage

Efficiently and effectively deliver an essential suite of member services that are tailored to meet the specific needs of specific groups within the membership.

Conferences

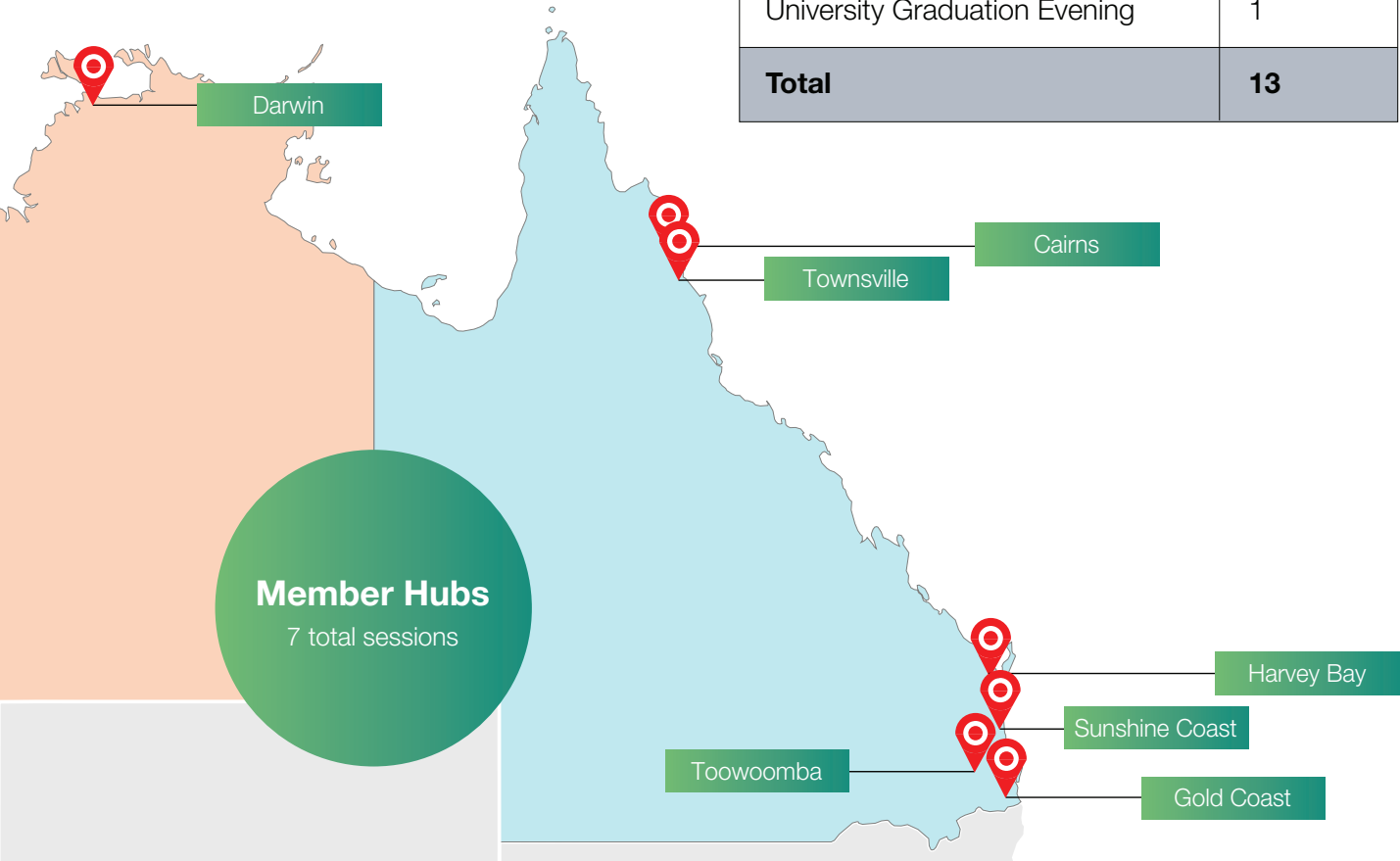
Australian Vision Convention (AVC) 2024

OQNT proudly hosted over 400 delegates at the Australian Vision Convention (AVC) from 6-7 April 2024 at the Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre and online.

The conference continued its tradition of featuring world-renowned speakers and offering insightful lectures and workshops on topics such as stroke patient identification and visual snow management.

The hybrid format allowed delegates from across Australia and beyond to participate virtually or in person, with access to on-demand CPD activities for four months after the event, enhancing clinical expertise and therapeutic knowledge.

OQNT Event Engagement	
Event type	Number held
Member Hub	7
ECO Webinar	3
Recent Graduate Evening	1
Australian Vision Congress	1
University Graduation Evening	1
Total	13



Member Support Initiatives

The Optometry Advisor Help Desk fielded 1,241 enquiries from members, providing expert advice on clinical, professional and HR-related matters.

Members have been kept informed of key developments through regular monthly newsletters, providing timely updates on issues including policy changes, CPD opportunities and advocacy efforts. These newsletters, along with other digital communication initiatives, have ensured members remain informed and supported in their professional roles.

It was a successful year for the OQNT ECO committee. A highlight included Suzanne Dunning and Courtenay Lind attending the National Early Career Optometrist (ECO) Think Tank in Melbourne in April 2024. ECO representatives from State divisions around the country gathered in Melbourne for a day of collaboration and discussion of topics affecting ECO's nationwide. Emily Henry passed the torch to Courtenay Lind who restructured the committee mid-year. Thank you to OQNT ECO Committee members Suzanne Dunning (Vice Chair), Anish Ghale, Julie Lee, Courtenay Lind (Board Member), Kate Merrin, Shon Prasad (Chair), Kristina Redmond, Abby Ussher, Cassy Versteeg and Prajna Vidyasagar for their contributions.



Strategic Pillar 3: Promote

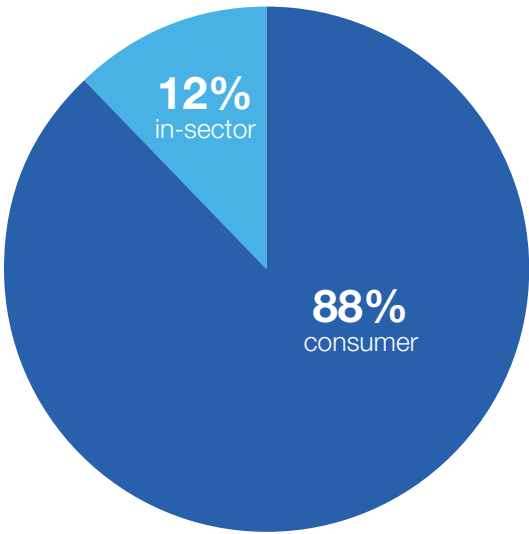
Ensure that Optometry Australia is the ‘go to’ organisation in eye health and that optometrists are the first port of call for eyes.

Growing Awareness and Visibility

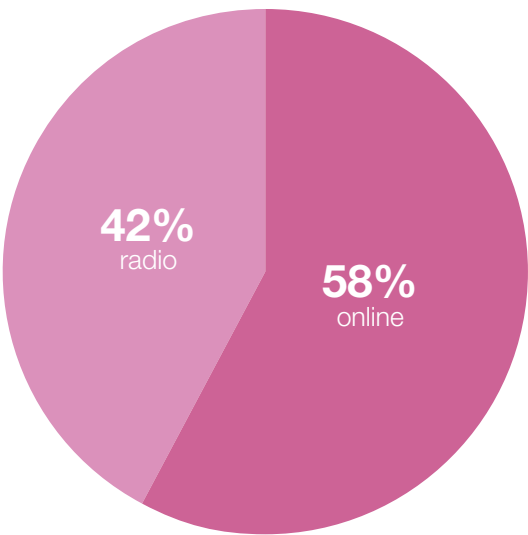
Our media presence has been robust, with a total of 26 media mentions and appearances in Queensland and Northern Territory media outlets.

While most coverage focused on national topics, we secured three pieces of coverage specific to OQNT, highlighting our commitment to raising awareness at state and territory level.

Media channel



Media reach



Strategic Pillar 4: Enduring Organisation

Collaborate, work effectively, share resources and capability to ensure consistency of services for all members through efficient and effective models that uplift the profession.

A Robust Organisation Now, and for the Future

In March 2024, OA entered into a service agreement with OQNT to support the division following staffing changes. This service agreement allowed OQNT to retain a Board responsible for strategic direction and oversight, while OA delivered most local member services, complementing the national services they have long provided to OQNT members. The transition was seamless, with no disruptions to local member services.

We've maintained a solid financial position, as detailed in the Treasurer's report. This stability was further supported by the successful hosting of the AVC in April. This event not only highlighted our dedication to supporting the profession with innovative and impactful learning opportunities but also reflected the strength of our collaboration with Optometry Australia in delivering a successful and highly regarded conference.

We have also taken a strong focus on reviewing and revising our governance policies and processes to ensure alignment with contemporary best practice. This included a comprehensive review of the Constitution, which ultimately saw members support the adoption of an updated Constitution early in the 2024-25 financial year.

Looking ahead, we have adopted a new strategic plan for 2024-27, aligning with OA's broader vision to drive towards a robust future for the profession and the association. This plan will guide our efforts in delivering high-value services to members while adapting to emerging challenges and opportunities in the industry.





Optometry
QUEENSLAND
NORTHERN TERRITORY