

# Optometry Victoria South Australia 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

It has been a year of some internal change for Optometry Victoria South Australia (OV/SA), whilst we continue to support members locally across Victoria and South Australia.

Following a vote of support from members, OV/SA operationally integrated with Optometry Australia (OA) from 1 November. This essentially means that OA now provides all state-level services to members across Victoria and South Australia, in addition to the national services, like Professional Indemnity Insurance, online CPD and one-to-one professional support, that they were already providing. The OV/SA Board continues to have oversight and set strategic direction for the organisation.

It has been a smooth transition to this more integrated mode of operations, and we are seeing multiple benefits for the organisation, including efficiencies and greater alignment of member offerings and advocacy efforts.

We have been fortunate to have two local optometrists with experience in policy and advocacy, in the role of State Lead Victoria and State Lead South Australia, to help guide this process and ensure our strong local member engagement remains. I would like to thank Lyn Hsieh and Cassandra Haines for stepping into and helping shape these new and important roles, and for their efforts on behalf of members.

There has been a strong focus on 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, in line with international practice and the needs and interests of our communities. We remain optimistic about positive moves in that direction in the near future. Our political advocacy has also had a strong focus on enhancing identification of children requiring intervention to address eye health and vision issues, with a push for investment to support increased community awareness of childhood myopia and on enhancing early childhood vision screening approaches.

There were some positive wins to celebrate this year. The Victorian Government, in recognition of the importance of children’s vision, announced increased investment in the Glasses4Kids program and the South Australian Government responded to our advocacy regarding the GlassesSA scheme, announcing some key enhancements which will be implemented over coming months. Our advocacy to ensure the Glasses SA scheme effectively supports optometrists to support their in-need patients, continues, and we are continuing to work closely with both Governments to ensure we build on their commitment to optometry and community eye health.

Our focus on ensuring more children access the eye care they need was also reflected in our community awareness efforts, including insertion of engaging glasses and informational links into the Victorian Department of Education and Training Prep Bag, provided to Prep students at all Victorian public schools, reminding kids and their parents of the importance of regular eye checks and providing information about finding a local optometrist.

We continue to recognise great opportunity to support and advance the profession whilst enabling better access to timely eye care for patients and communities, through effective collaborative care arrangements between optometrists and ophthalmologists. Throughout the year, we have showcased some of the impactful formal collaborative care programs already in operation across our two states, and worked closely with members to map the informal arrangements also being utilised across South Australia. These provide a solid base from which we continue to advocate for, and facilitate, the scaling-up of such approaches.

Prior to integration with OA, OV/SA was delighted to host, in partnership with ODMA, O=MEGA23/WCO4 in collaboration with the 4th World Congress of Optometry (WCO) in Melbourne. This was a truly inspiring and eclectic mix of quality CPD, with a large and engaging trade show. With over 3,000 attendees, O=MEGA23/WCO4 also provided a welcome opportunity to engage with colleagues after the quieter years surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. We were grateful for the strong support from members that made this such an exciting event. O=MEGA23/WCO4 was complemented by our CPD regional series across Victoria and South Australia, that provides members the opportunity to access quality, face-to-face, interactive CPD, locally.

At O=MEGA23/WCO4, we were pleased to award our inaugural, annual, Rising Star Award and Optometrist of the Year Award, and congratulate Alexis Ceecee Britten-Jones and Jacqueline Warren respectively.

On behalf of the OV/SA Board, I would like to note our gratitude to former CEO, Ilsa Hampton, who was instrumental in realising the integration of OV/SA with OA and the successful O=MEGA23/WCO4, whilst ensuring a consistently strong focus on delivering for our membership. Whilst Ilsa's tenure with OV/SA was relatively short, and ended in October 2023, her impact was significant.

It's been my absolute pleasure to step into the President role for OV/SA this year, taking the reins from Elise Pocknee-Clem, who I thank for her years of leadership at both OV/SA and Optometry South Australia. Elise continues as an OV/SA Director. I thank Elise, and our fellow directors, for their contributions throughout this period of change for our organisation.

Collectively the OV/SA Board is looking forward to another productive year delivering for our members. We have moved 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.

**Timothy Lo**

President





# Treasurer's report

Our financial result for 2023-24 was a surplus of \$479,840, exceeding a budgeted profit of \$146,500. This surplus was largely driven by strong membership renewals and the excellent outcome of the O=MEGA23/WCO4 conference.

In November 2023, Optometry Victoria South Australia (OV/SA) entered into an operational integration with Optometry Australia (OA), which supported cost containment and provided some savings to budget. This strong financial performance in 2023-24 supported the Board's decision to maintain membership fees for 2024-25 at the same rate as 2023-24.

Capitation fees paid to OA (the National organisation) remains our primary expense (\$2,004,512). Services supported by capitation are a strong supplement to local member services and state-based representation and advocacy.

The O=MEGA23/WCO4 conference, held successfully in Melbourne in September 2023, was a great success. Income was substantially better than budget, mainly due to increased delegate representation and exhibitor income. 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 a modest cash income (around \$2,000 per month) towards operational costs with its main purpose 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 approximately \$67,000.

The valuation of our property at 28 Drummond Street, Carlton Vic, was appropriate to carry on the books. This will be reviewed accordingly in the coming year.

Our annual audit was completed by Nexia Sydney 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 OV/SA website, and the auditor will attend the AGM in November 2024.

**Kristin Guppy**

Treasurer



# Board of Directors



**Timothy Lo**  
President



**Dr Anne Weymouth**  
Vice-President



**Kristin Guppy**  
Treasurer



**Elise Pocknee-Clem**  
Director



**Laura Carson**  
Director



**Simon Hanna**  
Director



**Andrew Anderson**  
Director



**Stephanie Callisto**  
Director



**Isaac Curkpatrick**  
Associate Director



**Sophie Pym**  
Associate Director

# Strategic Pillar 1: Lead

- Lead membership through market and sector changes
- Improve community eye health and vision care with a particular emphasis on underserved populations
- Uphold and promote professional standards
- Drive positive outcomes for optometry and improved patient outcomes through the development of innovative models of care

## Advocacy and Collaboration

We have been actively pursuing government support in Victoria to take forward the next phase of collaborative eye care between optometrists and ophthalmologists across the state and to prioritise children’s vision. This has included seeking a partnership to raise community awareness of the global myopia epidemic, to reduce its impact on Victorians now and into the future. These issues were the focus of our pre-Budget submission and subsequent political advocacy.

We welcomed the Victorian Minister for Health’s acknowledgement of the benefits collaborative care approaches can offer to community access and the Victorian Government’s expansion of the Glasses for Kids Program.

We have continued to actively partner with local stakeholders. We have participated in outreach advisory forums hosted by Rural Workforce Agency Victoria (RWAV) to finalise plans for 2024-25 Visiting Optometrists Scheme (VOS) outreach programs and actively engaged with Primary Health Networks to strategise interprofessional collaboration, focusing on improving integration between optometrists and other health care professionals.

Similarly, in South Australia, through our pre-budget submission and subsequent advocacy meetings, we have called on the government to invest in scaling collaborative care programs that enhance timely access to eye care and to focus on children’s vision by enhancing early childhood vision screening and facilitating community awareness of childhood myopia. We have also advocated for a comprehensive review of the GlassesSA scheme, to ensure it delivers against its important objectives.





We welcomed the announcement of enhanced investment and initial changes to the GlassesSA program subsequently announced in the 2024-25 South Australian Budget; and continue to advocate for additional meaningful change aligned with member feedback.

We have also focused on improving driver licensing policies and practices, with collaborative discussions with the Australian Medical Association (South Australia) regarding improvements to associated forms and meetings with the National Transport Commission and South Australian driver licensing authority to address concerns about binocular visual field requirements for medical review panels.

We continue as active contributors to the outreach advisory forums hosted by the Rural Doctors Workforce Australia (RDWA) that impact VOS and have contributed to further development of the South Australian Clinical Prioritisation Criteria.

Across jurisdictions, and in alignment with national efforts, we have also strongly advocated for recognition of the community benefits of enabling therapeutically endorsed optometrists to prescribe oral therapeutics as clinically appropriate.

We have welcomed the input to our work from the Strategic Advisory Committee Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania (SACVSAT) throughout the year. A key milestone was the endorsement of a revised Terms of Reference to formalise the inclusion Tasmanian representatives. Three meetings were held, focusing on integration progress and providing advice on supporting mid-career optometrists and advancing digital health transformation. OV/SA and OA values the SACVSAT's strategic guidance and contributions, and thanks Committee members Saumya Anand (SA), Mitchell Anjou (Co-Chair) (Vic), James Armitage (Vic), Adam Barresi (Tas), Luke Burns (Tas), Loucia Calder (SA), Jessica Chi (Vic), Jo Croft (Co-Chair) (SA), Jelle de Bock (SA), Mark DePaola (SA), Phill Fent (Vic), Lisa Ho (SA), Stuart Holden (SA), Tamra Karolewicz (SA), Graham Lakkis (Vic), Paige Lynch (SA), Senthil Murugappa (SA), Viki Nikas (SA), Daniel Thompson (Vic) and Nicholas Willson (Tas) for their contributions.



# Strategic Pillar 2: Engage

- Inspire collegiality within the membership
- Provide outstanding member value
- Engage with optometry students

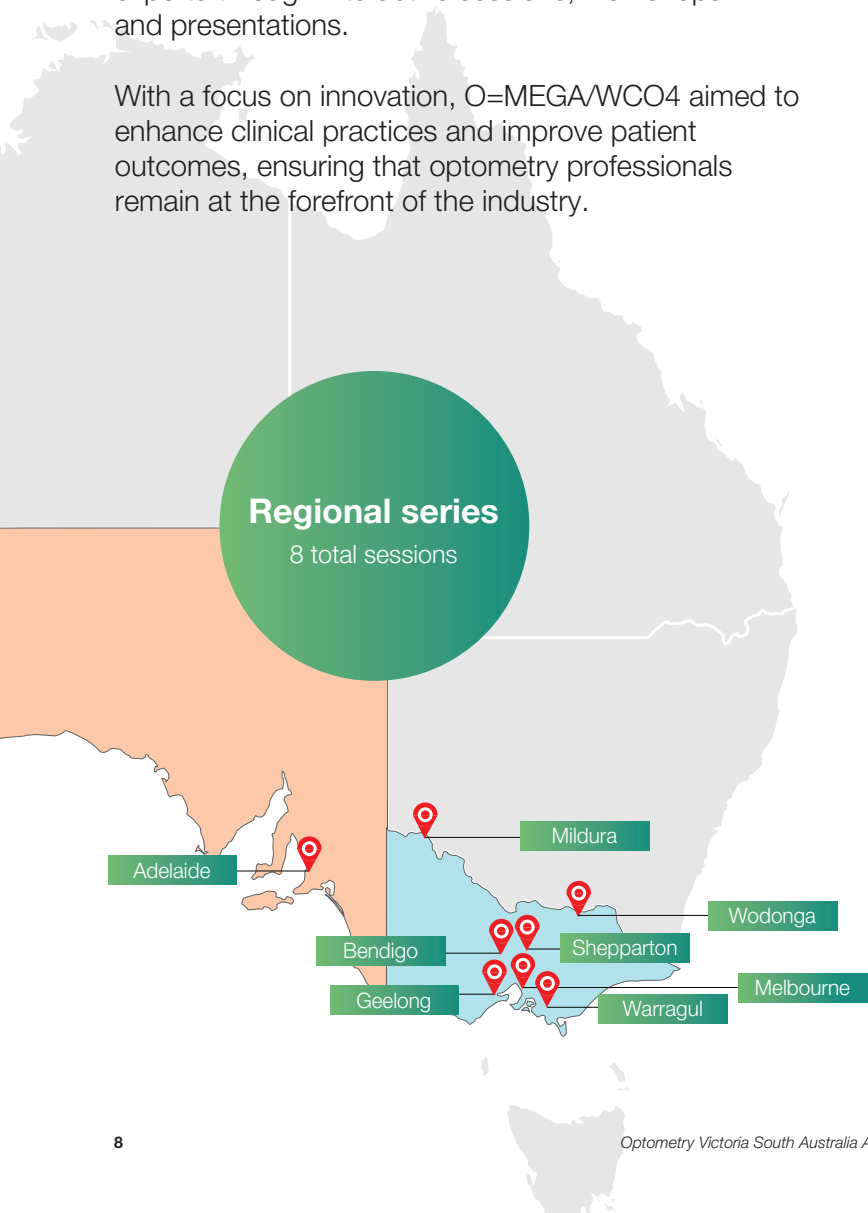
## Conferences

### O=MEGA23/WCO4

Presented by OV/SA, the Optical Distributors and Manufacturers Association (ODMA), and the World Council of Optometry (WCO), O=MEGA/WCO4 took place from 8-10 September 2023 in Melbourne.

The event brought together **over 3,000** optometrists and industry professionals from around the world to advance knowledge and skills in the field. It provided a unique platform for attendees to engage with leading experts through interactive sessions, workshops and presentations.

With a focus on innovation, O=MEGA/WCO4 aimed to enhance clinical practices and improve patient outcomes, ensuring that optometry professionals remain at the forefront of the industry.



### OV/SA Event Engagement

Event type	Number held
Regional series	8
University student presentations	8
CPR refresher	7
ECO peer mentoring	4
ECO seminar	4
ECO webinar	3
Recent graduate evening	2
Immediate graduate dinner	2
Careers expo	2
Retired optometrists lunch	2
Webinar	1
O=MEGA/WCO4 conference	1
Special member evening	1
University industry day	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>





## Member Support and Engagement Initiatives

The Optometry Advisor Help Desk fielded 2,727 enquiries from members, providing expert advice on clinical, professional and HR-related matters.

The ECOVSA Committee had another successful year. A highlight of the year was the hosting of 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. ECOVSA CPD events were held in Melbourne and Adelaide, and several Peer Mentoring evenings were held in regional locations providing important opportunities for regional early career optometrists to create supportive networks. Thank you to ECOVSA Committee members Madeline Baker, Dominique Birbeck, John De Francesco, Hannah Ellis, Grace Hand, Liam Hua, Chelsea Lane, Kaavya Nair, Claire Ong and Esmeralda Stefanopoulos for their contributions.

Presented at the O=MEGA23/WCO4 conference, we launched the Rising Star and Optometrist of the Year awards, recognising Alexis Ceecee Britten-Jones and Jacqueline Warren respectively for their exceptional work in advancing the profession.

Members have been kept informed of key developments through regular fortnightly 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.

## Education Committee

The input of our CPD Committee has been vital to shaping an impactful and successful CPD program across the year. Thank you to CPD Committee members Andrew Anderson, James Armitage, Anthea Cochrane, Isaac Curkpatrick, Jose Estevez, Kristina Iacovangelo, May Suit Ho, Timothy Lo, Christina Ly (Chair) and Mitchell Walker for their contributions, time and expertise.

# Strategic Pillar 3: Promote

- Increase public awareness, knowledge and understanding of the role of optometry in Victoria and South Australia
- Work with other healthcare professionals to promote optometry

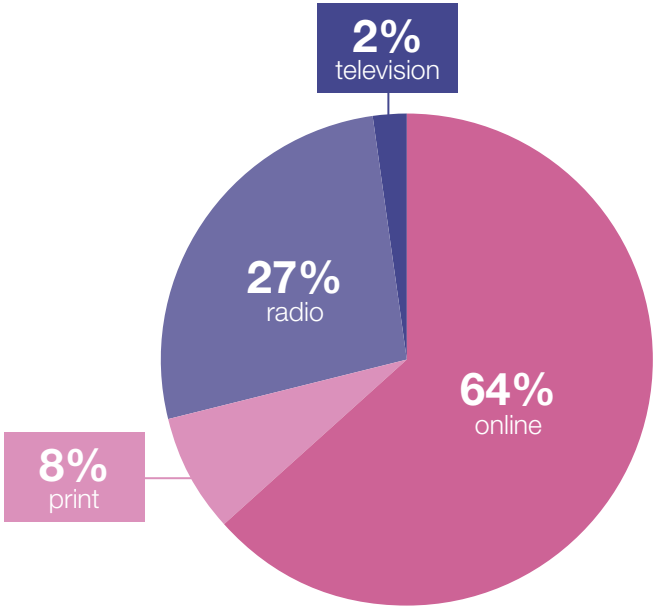
## Growing Awareness and Visibility

Our media presence has been robust, with a total of 102 media mentions and appearances in national media outlets reaching Victoria and South Australia.

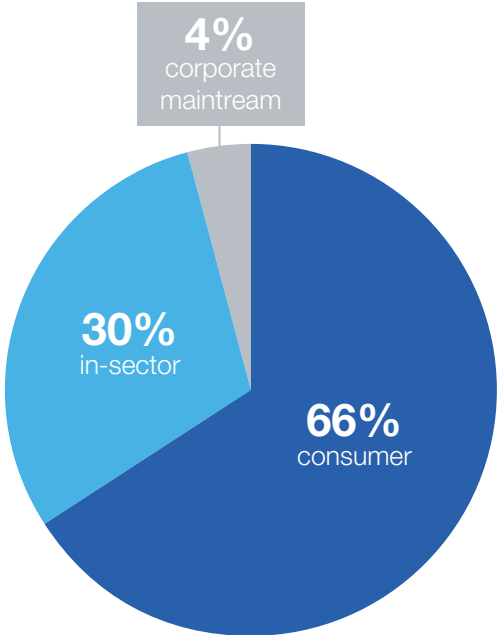
While the majority of coverage focused on national topics, we secured five pieces of coverage specific to OV/SA, highlighting our commitment to raising awareness at state level.

To increase awareness of the importance of regular eye examinations for children, OV/SA included entertaining, diffraction glasses, with a QR code linking to *Good Vision for Life* and information on how to find a local optometrist, in the 2024 Prep Bags provided to students entering primary school.

OV/SA also sought to actively engage with the Western Victoria Primary Health Network (WVPHN) during their needs assessment consultation, to highlight key challenges in eye care delivery in the region, including limited access to services, financial barriers for patients, and the need for enhanced multidisciplinary care. Led by feedback from members, OV/SA emphasised the opportunity to fully utilise optometry in collaborative solutions which address these issues, as modelled in other parts of the country, and improve outcomes in a region facing an ageing population and high rates of chronic health conditions.



Media channel



Media reach

# Strategic Pillar 4: Enduring Organisation

- Ensure long-term financial stability
- Ensure organisational capability
- Continue to be a collegial member of the optometry federation

## A Robust Organisation Now, and for the Future

Following a member vote in support, OV/SA operationally integrated with OA from 1 November 2023. This integration allows OV/SA to retain a Board responsible for strategic direction and oversight, while OA delivers local member services, complementing the national services they have long provided to OV/SA members. The transition has been seamless, with no disruptions to local member services. By aligning our national and state-level services more closely, we've achieved greater efficiencies and enhanced value for members, ensuring a more consistent and streamlined experience across all levels of service.

As part of our efforts to support succession planning for the Board and develop future leaders, we appointed Sophie Pym as an Associate Director. Additionally, Meghraj Thakkar joined as an Appointed Director in July 2024, bringing a wealth of expertise in governance and financial management from related sectors. These appointments are part of our strategic focus on building a strong leadership pipeline and maintaining robust governance practices.

We've also maintained a solid financial position, as detailed in the Treasurer's report. This stability was further supported by the successful hosting of the O=MEGA23/WCO4 conference in partnership with ODMA and the WCO. This event not only showcased our leadership in the industry but also reinforced our financial strength through effective event management.

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**  
VICTORIA  
SOUTH AUSTRALIA