



OV/SA, OTas and OA Integration Project

The Facts

WHY THE INTEGRATION PROJECT?

- The potential operational integration of Optometry Victoria South Australia (OV/SA) and Optometry Tasmania (OTas) with Optometry Australia (OA) provides a great opportunity to make the whole greater than the sum of its parts.
- Integration will likely bring about many benefits, including:
 - A strong and aligned strategic focus, more efficiently positioned to identify and prioritise critical issues affecting our sector.
 - A more cohesive and effective advocacy approach through a single voice.
 - Simplified governance, organisational and operational structure, enabling us to streamline our decision-making processes, reduce duplication and create greater efficiencies.
 - Greater long-term financial stability and resources to fund future strategies and projects.
 - Reducing confusion for our other stakeholders, such as heads of ophthalmology and patient advocacy groups, enhancing our influence.

WHAT WILL THE CHANGE LOOK LIKE?

- OA will continue to provide members nationally with access to its full range of member services.
- The new, integrated structure will also deliver **local** member engagement, CPD, advocacy and stakeholder engagement in Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania, via dedicated state leads.
- No major assets of any organisation will be transferred initially. OV/SA will keep its current office in Carlton, which will continue to host member events and other meetings, as well as service staff who elect to work from there.
- All staff will be provided roles at OA for a minimum of 12 months. Over time, individual staff roles may change, and there will be a consultative approach around role design. With the exception of a state lead position for Victoria, South Australia, and Tasmania, the exact organisational structure is still to be determined.
- Currently the three organisations enjoy positive existing relationships, team comradery and many cultural similarities. They are already working together to varying degrees through service arrangements in the communications and events teams, which have demonstrated an openness to innovation, flexibility and a mutual commitment to members. The leadership team of all three organisations remains strongly committed to supporting a positive and effective cultural integration.

MEMBER VOTE

- The final decision on whether the integration occurs will rest with members of both OV/SA and OTas who will have the opportunity to vote on the proposed change for their respective division. The member votes will take place on from 11-18 July (OV/SA) and 5 August (OTas), respectively.
- For the proposed integration to proceed, the 'yes' vote must be at least 75% of votes.
- Should the majority vote be 'yes' within a division, implementation will then occur from August and be finalised by 1 November 2023.

Answers to Common Questions

Why do OV/SA and OTas want to integrate with OA?

The OV/SA and OTas boards strongly believe that integration will create a strengthened and more efficient membership group, which is likely to eliminate duplication and increase efficiencies and value. Bringing the organisations together reduces administration and improves on the planning and implementation of strategy, communications and member services at the state level.

Optometry Victoria has only recently merged with Optometry South Australia; why are they keen to change again?

Members in Victoria and South Australia have benefitted from being serviced by the one, single and stronger organisation and through this, OV/SA has been able to realise greater cost efficiencies, thereby delivering higher levels of service and support.

The OV/SA Board (in agreement with the OTas and OA Boards) sees this next step as a logical progression to creating an even stronger organisation and one where their members can look forward to even further cost efficiencies and expanded services.

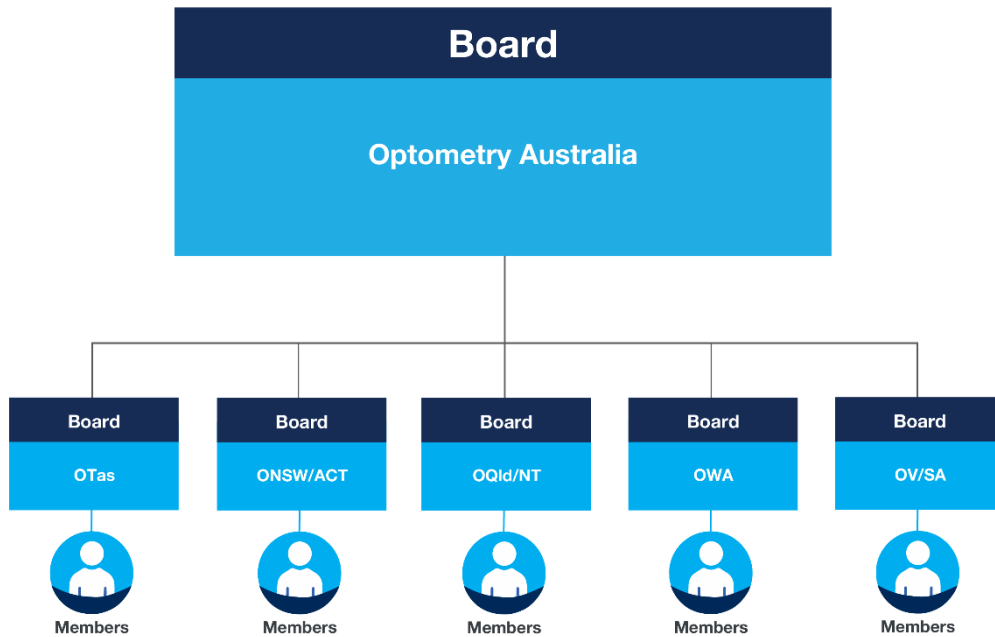
Unlike the Vic/SA merge, this proposal is for an operational integration only, which means the OV/SA board continues to operate.

But aren't you all the same organisation?

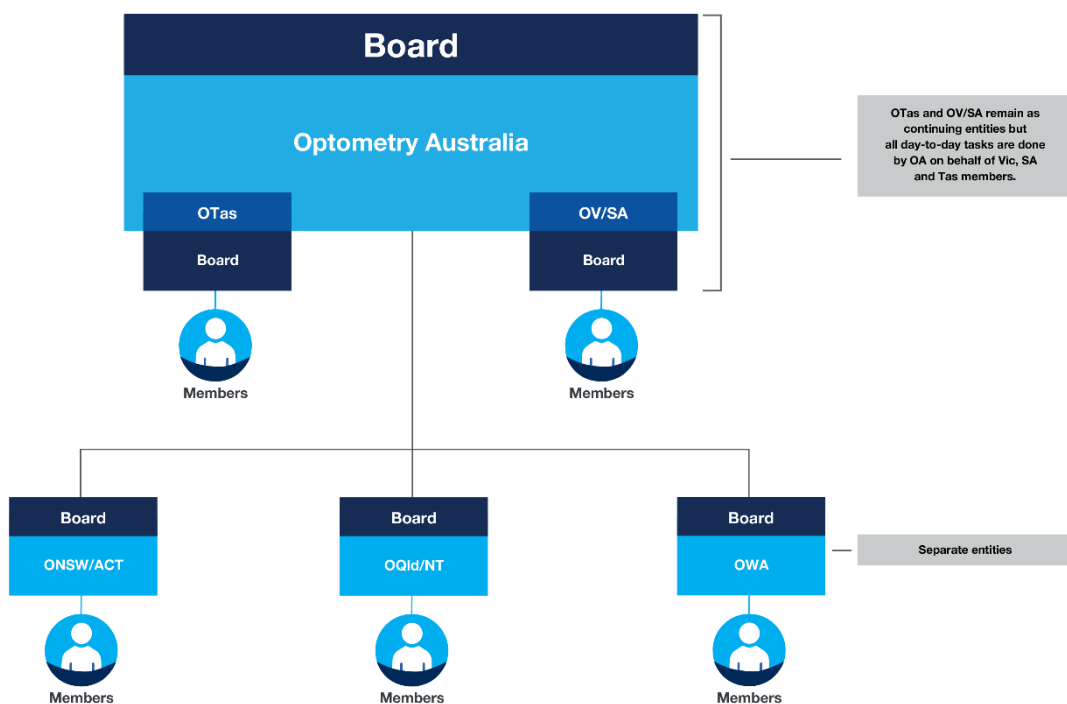
No, currently they are three separate organisations. Your peak professional body operates as a federated structure with all state divisions being separate entities. You are a member of your state division; your state division is a member of OA. Like members of every state division, a portion of your annual membership fee goes to OA to support federal advocacy, member support, CPD and policy initiatives. This will continue to be the case in a post-integration scenario.

See diagram below to show the existing structure compared with the proposed, integrated structure, showing the continuation of the OV/SA and OTas entities with boards.

Existing Structure



Proposed Integrated Structure



Is OV/SA merging with OTas?

No, OV/SA members are voting for OV/SA to integrate with OA. OTas is conducting a similar conversation and vote with its own members, in parallel to OV/SA. If members vote “Yes,” their division will be integrated into OA and will retain their individual identities and separate Boards. OV/SA and OTas will not merge organisations prior to integration, and it is possible that one organisation will integrate with OA without the other.

Why is a 75% ‘yes’ vote required for integration to pass?

This number has been decided by the OV/SA Board and is consistent with the majority required constitutional change. While the Board technically does not require a member vote to proceed with integration, as a member-based organisation we only wish to proceed with this process if our membership is strongly behind it.

What’s the purpose of maintaining the Boards and individual entities? What powers and responsibilities will the OV/SA Board continue to have?

The OV/SA Board will retain their fiduciary duties as directors — to ensure that the organisation remains solvent and that finances are well maintained. We believe it is important in the new structure to retain a Board chiefly concerned with delivery of services at the local level. While there will no longer be a CEO of OV/SA, the OV/SA Board will be responsible for OA’s delivery on the services agreement between OV/SA and OA, contributing to strategy and approving annual budgets. The OV/SA Board will also continue to look after OV/SA’s larger assets, such as the invested funds and the property at 28 Drummond St Carlton, which will remain a base of operations for staff members.

Will there be no CEO of OV/SA?

No, there will be no staff employed by OV/SA, including the CEO position. Our current CEO, Ilsa Hampton, has the same assurance that all staff have—the maintenance of employment in a new position for 12 months after integration. All individual OV/SA staff roles may change after a consultative approach around role design with OA.

OA is the national body. How will they know what I need as a member of OV/SA?

OA will understand what you need because the integration includes members of the OV/SA team as well as ongoing engagement with members face to face as well as through our advisory committees and other forums. The dedicated state leads in the OA team will be focused on ensuring members feel connected and understood.

I was told that the integration will be covered by a “services agreement”— what is that?

That is correct. A services agreement is a legally binding contract between two parties that outlines the terms and conditions for the provision of services. While the agreement itself is a lengthy legal document, we want to be transparent about its contents with our membership, as this is one of the key documents in our integration framework that ensures that your services remain front and centre during the transition phase and in the time ahead. As an example, our services agreement contains assurance for the continued delivery of our biennial conferences in

SA and VIC. Financial arrangements with OA will continue as they are now, with a portion of your fees paid to OA for national work, and a portion used for local member services and initiatives.

The services agreement includes reporting requirements and metrics so that the OV/SA Board and OTas Board can monitor OA's local service delivery to ensure the continued focus on local member needs.

How else will OA be held accountable for delivery of services at the local level?

We are aware that with the benefit of streamlining our organisation comes the risk of members feeling there is reduced focus at the local level. Mitigating this risk has been central to the design of the integration project and has guided several of the decisions made thus far: the design of the services agreement, the maintenance of our Board, the promise to retain all OV/SA staff for at least 12 months after integration and keeping our office at 28 Drummond St as a home for staff and events.

To manage the risk of self-reporting, the agreement with OA is also clear that in matters related to OV/SA's membership of OA, OV/SA is entitled to direct representation in meetings and/or matters (such as an OV/SA Board member) and for evaluating OA's delivery on the services agreement, a third-party consultant can be put in place to ensure that, over the course of the integration process, OA is fulfilling its obligations to deliver local services.

Will my membership fee be used by OA to pay for services delivered to members in NSW, ACT, Qld, NT, WA?

All state divisions currently pay Optometry Australia an annual fee to deliver national services to their members and to support federal advocacy and policy initiatives.

Each state division's payment to OA for national services is determined by its relative size. This arrangement will not change, meaning that post integration, your membership fee will still be split towards national and state services in the same manner.

Will I be able to provide feedback on this planned integration? Will I have a say in how I want my membership body to support me?

We are always happy to talk to our members and would welcome hearing from you to chat through any concerns you may have about the planned integration. You may get in touch with our CEO Ilsa Hampton or any member of our team who you deal with regularly.

Ilsa Hampton, CEO, Optometry Victoria South Australia – i.hampton@optometry.org.au

Will OA employ representatives to service my state?

While much of the new organisational structure of OA is yet to be decided, we can confirm that there will be 'State Lead' positions created for South Australia, Victoria, and Tasmania, in the event that both organisations' memberships vote to integrate. Connecting with members and ensuring the delivery of high-quality local services in their respective states will be the chief responsibility of these new roles.

When will I start to see the benefits from this integration?

We would hope that members in Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania will start to benefit within the first 12 months of implementation, which if it goes ahead, will be finalised by 1 November 2023.

I have good relationships with my state division and/or OA staff and managers. Will they be impacted by this integration i.e. will they lose their jobs?

All parties have committed to ensuring that no staff member will lose employment because of this change. All staff will be provided roles at OA for a minimum of 12 months. Over time, individual staff roles may change, and there will be a consultative approach around role design. The exact organisational structure is still to be determined with the exception of the confirmed state lead positions.

Currently the three organisations enjoy positive existing relationships, team comradery and many cultural similarities. They are already working together to varying degrees through service arrangements in the communications and events teams, which have demonstrated an openness to innovation, flexibility and a mutual commitment to members. The leadership team of all three organisations remains strongly committed to supporting a positive and effective cultural integration.

Could integration be rolled back if members were unsatisfied with the result? Would this require another vote by the membership?

There are processes in the services agreement that make it possible to unwind the integration process in the event of strong member dissatisfaction or other serious issues. As with the current integration proposal, this would not technically require a member vote, although member consultation would undoubtedly lie at the heart of this decision, especially given its potential costliness and difficulty.

I am a member of ONSW/ACT, OQld/NT or OWA, why are my state divisions not involved in this integration project?

OV/SA and OTas approached OA about integrating, hence this change is currently restricted to these three organisations. The project is being run transparently, with consultation opportunities available throughout for all other stakeholders.