

SCOPE



MAGAZINE OF OPTOMETRY VICTORIA SOUTH AUSTRALIA DECEMBER | 2019



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EDITORIAL



As 2019 comes to a close it's timely to reflect on what's been achieved throughout the year.

This year has seen momentous change for the association with the amalgamation of Optometry Victoria and Optometry South Australia into our new entity Optometry Victoria South Australia (OV/SA).

The announcement in October that OV/SA had won the bid to host the World Congress of Optometry in

Melbourne in 2021, was truly significant and a key indicator that OV/SA had indeed, arrived as its own organisation, ready to be ambitious for members in its own right.

Throughout this time we have continued to deliver and expand our CPD offerings to members through the highly successful, three day O=MEGA19, a single day, mini-conference in Adelaide in November, the rural, regional and metropolitan CPD events and, seminars and projects targeted specifically to early career practitioners.

Member resources such as the *Assessing Fitness to Drive Clinical Guideline* and the *Locum Guide* have aimed to support members to deliver the best quality eye care they can, and to practice in a way that is tailored to their circumstances and needs.

Production of the *Guide to Healthy Eyes for Kids and Parents* consumer resource which was distributed to 65,000 prep children and their families in Victoria early in the year, and the

ongoing support and advocacy for the optometrist role at the Modbury Hospital in South Australia are projects of which we are very proud.

As we enter what is often the busiest time of the year for many practices, we encourage you to reflect on your own successes this year. Optometrists provide a vital service to the community, and the clinical interventions by many of our members have an often untold, and significant impact on the wellbeing of patients and their families.

I wish you a safe and happy festive season, and look forward to continuing to work on your behalf throughout 2020.

Yours sincerely,

Pete Haydon
Chief Executive Officer

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN MEMBERS CONFIRMED FOR SACSA

OV/SA recently invited members based in South Australia to join the new State Advisory Committee South Australia (SACSA). The SACSA will provide operational advice to the OV/SA secretariat, on clinical and policy matters, ensuring that local issues are heard and South Australian specific impacts of projects and emerging issues are identified and responded to.

Confirmed committee members are Loucia Calder, Jelle de Bock, Lauren Field, Karen Hawkes, Lisa Ho, Stuart Holden, Alex Jaworski and Senthil Murrugappa.

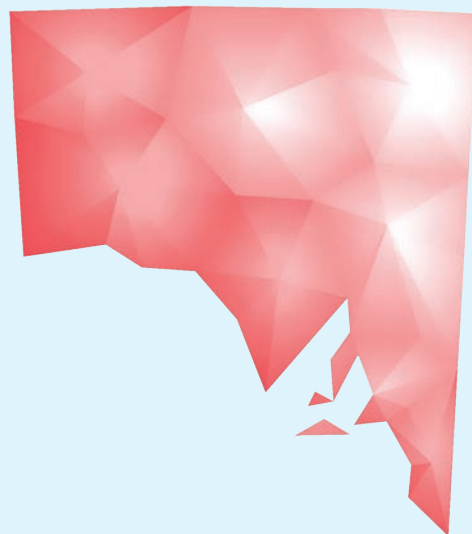
SACSA committee members work across corporate and independent practices, as well as academia, and

they're based in both rural and metropolitan locations. The committee includes members who are early and mid-career, as well as experienced members. Members are employees as well as franchisees and practice owners.

It's anticipated that the SACSA committee will have a similar remit to the already existing Optometric Clinical and Policy Committee Victoria (OCPCV).

The SACSA committee will receive secretariat support from OV/SA's Special Advisor Member Services and Policy, Libby Boschen.

We thank the committee members for agreeing to take on the SACSA role, and we look forward to working with them.



LOCAL NEWS

JINGYI CHEN: STUDENT ACADEMIC AWARD WINNER (DEAKIN) 2019

Congratulations to Jingyi Chen on winning the OV/SA student academic award 2019. Jingyi graduated from Deakin University in June this year. After a short break she has taken on a position with an OPSM franchise on the south coast of New South Wales.

"Starting work has been really exciting. It's been so good to see in person what I've learnt about in textbooks over the last few years. It's been great getting to know the community in Batemans Bay, the practice staff are fantastic and my mentor Craig is very experienced," Jingyi said.

"There's a slightly older population in the community so there is a lot of pathology and a lot of co-management with the ophthalmologist. The practice also has a lot of fantastic equipment and that was a key deciding feature for me when I was looking for a role," she said.

We asked Jingyi how she felt about winning the award, and what she plans to do with the prize money.

"I was really surprised to win this award as I didn't expect it at all. I worked really hard during my degree, and I'm so grateful that it's paid off. But I feel like everyone in my cohort was very deserving, and any one of us could have won it," Jingyi said.

"For a while now I've been keen to participate in the medical ship program that travels to Papua New Guinea, so I'm hoping to use the money towards a trip like that. I may have to wait until I have a little more experience though!" she said.

The OV/SA student academic award recognises the student who epitomises the highest commitment to patient care, including outstanding clinical aptitude, commitment to evidence-based practice and professionalism. The successful recipient of the award receives \$1,500.

Thank you to the Deakin University staff for their collaboration in identifying the successful student.



Jingyi Chen with OV/SA CEO Pete Haydon.

CHAMINI WIJESUNDERA: ECO EDUCATION GRANT WINNER (VICTORIA) 2019



Chamini Wijesundera has won the \$1,500 ECO Education Grant (Victoria) 2019.

Chamini is currently undertaking a PhD in neuro-ophthalmology at La Trobe University in collaboration with the Department of Optometry and Vision Sciences at the University

of Melbourne. She also works as an optometrist in an outer suburban Specsavers store.

Chamini's research is focused on investigating the visual changes in acute stroke patients and during recovery.

"I assess patients within a week of a stroke, for portable ipad-based, bed-side perimetry, visual acuity, visuo-motor function and fundus examination. Patients are followed up at three and twelve-month intervals to investigate for visual function post stroke, neuroplasticity and retrograde degeneration with OCT," Chamini said.

"There is limited research done about the visual function of stroke patients during the acute stage and this is the first ever study to report visual function as early as 48 hours post stroke," she said.

Chamini will use the grant to present her latest research findings at the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology (ARVO) in Baltimore in May 2020.

"I'll be presenting the acute stroke and recovery data from my research, as well as a comprehensive overview of the eye-brain function in cerebrovascular disease and the role of neuro-optometry in this. Attending ARVO will also help me expand my knowledge through exposure to other research and professional work in the field," Chamini said.

"I feel very privileged and blessed to have received the ECO Education Grant (Victoria). I hope that eventually my research will strengthen the skills and the role of all optometrists in the management of patients with neurological conditions that could often affect their visual integrity," she said.

OV/SA and our Early Career Optometrists Victoria South Australia (ECOV/SA) committee thank ophthalmologist Dr Chrisotlyn Raj and Sunbury Eye Surgeons for their generous sponsorship of the grant.

FUTURE LEADERS RECOGNISED THROUGH THE HEALTH SECTOR LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

The Health Sector Leadership Program (HSLP) is a specialised program for nominated health professionals who are ready to take the next step in relation to leadership. Each year OV/SA is invited to nominate four members to participate in the program.

The 2019 OV/SA participants are Ash Chan, Cassie Haines, Lyn Hsieh and Lisa Lombardi.

The program was developed by the Australian Dentists Association (Victoria) and is sponsored by Guild Insurance and Leadership Victoria.

Through the program Leadership Victoria deliver a series of workshops, covering four key leadership attributes: ethics, communications, managing change (Influence) and managing change (resilience).

Mentoring is also provided as an optional element of the program. The HSLP culminates in a graduation ceremony at the Old Treasury Building in Melbourne.



Health Sector Leadership Program 2019 graduates (from L-R): Lisa Lombardi, Ash Chan, Lyn Hsieh, Cassandra Haines.

SURVEY AIMS TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF OPTOMETRISTS

Researchers from Queensland University of Technology (QUT) led by Professor Sharon Bentley, are undertaking research to better understand the health and wellbeing of Australian optometrists.

Current data suggests that one in five Australians are experiencing a mental health condition each year. Amongst OV/SA members this equates to over 400 people who may be experiencing the debilitating reality of depression, anxiety or other issues.

A recent survey by Beyond Blue found 27 per cent of doctors have experienced anxiety or depression in the previous 12 months. This is likely

to be similar for optometrists, with escalating workloads and pressures to perform at work. In fact, the recent survey by OV/SA's early career optometrists committee, found that more than half of those surveyed struggled with job satisfaction in the previous 12 months.

The QUT researchers are keen to use results of their study to develop strategies to better support optometrists and to help them recognise when they need to help and, to seek help.

Members are encouraged to support the research by participating in the survey, which takes around 15-20

minutes to complete. The survey closes on 16 December, 2019.

Responses are strictly anonymous, and only de-identified survey results will be published.

For more information about the research or to participate in the survey visit www.optometry.org.au/research_surveys/optometrists-urged-to-do-mental-health-and-well-being-survey/

For mental health support visit www.beyondblue.org.au or call them on 1300 224 636, or contact Lifeline on 13 11 14.

LOCAL NEWS

AN UPDATE ON THE GLASSES FOR KIDS PROGRAM

Glasses for Kids (GFK) is a Victorian government-funded, early intervention program which aims to remove vision impairments as a potential barrier to educational engagement in prep to grade three students of selected Victorian schools in low income areas. GFK, which is administered by State Schools Relief (SSR), delivers eye care and if needed, glasses at no cost to participating families.

The first iteration of GFK was completed in 2018 with 290 schools visited as part of the program. Additional program funding has been provided by the Victorian government for 2019-2023.

OV/SA had informal discussions with GFK in late August about the proposed 2019-2023 program. In late October GFK invited optometrists to complete a tender outlining their interest in participating in the program.

OV/SA supports the broad aim of the GFK program, and the increased focus in the 2019-2023 program on delivering

comprehensive eye examinations to children.

However we have been alerted to the potential that the current GFK tender requirements may place participating optometrists in breach of the Medicare Benefits Schedule (Optometrical Services Schedule).

The concern relates to the section of the Medicare Benefits Schedule which states that Medicare benefits are not payable "where the service has been rendered by or on behalf of, or under an arrangement with, the Commonwealth, a State or a local governing body or an authority established by a law of the Commonwealth, a law of a State or a law of an internal Territory".

Working in collaboration with Optometry Australia we obtained legal advice which concluded that GFK may be considered to be provided under an arrangement with a State government, and therefore it may not be appropriate to bill Medicare for these services.

We alerted SSR to our concerns and we discussed our legal advice with them. SSR subsequently obtained their own legal advice, which came to a different conclusion. They therefore decided to proceed with the tender in its current format.

We decided to take a cautious approach to this issue and alerted all OV/SA members to our concerns through the November edition of e-Wink, as well as a more detailed email to members who had previously participated in the program.

As the member association for optometrists we want to ensure that all of our members are fully informed of the potential risks as well as the benefits of participation in GFK.

We will continue to liaise with SSR, and keep a watch-in-brief on the program. Members who would like to discuss this issue further can contact OV/SA on (03) 9652 9100 or email office.vicsa@optometry.org.au

ANOTHER RETAILER SUCCESSFULLY SPOOKED ON HALLOWEEN

Distributing warning letters to uninformed South Australian cosmetic contact lens retailers has become as synonymous with Halloween as the grinning pumpkins. The initiative of one of our vigilant student members in October provided a great opportunity for OV/SA to educate yet another chain of fancy-dress retailers of the dangers of misusing novelty contact lenses.

In 2010, in response to lobbying by Optometry SA, South Australia became the first jurisdiction to include novelty (or plano lenses) in the definition of contact lenses under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (SA). As a result, whilst any retailer can sell 'spider eyes' to party-goers, they can only supply them to a customer who produces a current prescription for contact lenses written by an optometrist (or medical practitioner).

OV/SA routinely writes to recalcitrant retailers, informing them of the legislation and the reasons for it.

Experience suggests that alerting the reader to the potential \$30,000 fine in the first line tends to sharpen the focus of even the most belligerent retailer. Where possible, we monitor compliance after the warning and provide evidence of any further breaches to the SA Government to follow up.

Members are encouraged to email office.vicsa@optometry.org.au with details of retailers selling cosmetic contact lenses and ready-mades so we can advise them of the law.



KIRSTY JOHNSTON: A RE-IGNITED LOVE OF LEARNING



ORIGINALLY FROM ADELAIDE, KIRSTY MOVED TO MELBOURNE TO STUDY OPTOMETRY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE. AFTER GRADUATING IN 1997 KIRSTY RETURNED TO ADELAIDE TO TAKE UP A ROLE WITH LAUBMAN AND PANK WHERE SHE LOCUMED IN ADELAIDE AND ACROSS RURAL SOUTH AUSTRALIA. IN 1999 KIRSTY TOOK ON A ROLE WITH HEALTH PARTNERS IN ADELAIDE WHERE SHE WORKED FOR 17 YEARS. SHE RECENTLY MOVED TO A PART-TIME POSITION WITH A SPECSAVERS PRACTICE IN ADELAIDE. SHE HAS ALSO WORKED PART-TIME AT FLINDERS UNIVERSITY SINCE 2012.

We asked Kirsty what her role at Flinders University involves, and how she finds the work.

"In 2012 I responded to an email looking for optometrists to be involved in case-based learning in what was, at that time, the new Flinders University optometry degree. After workshops and training I realised how much I'd missed having the opportunity to be involved with the university, and I was super excited, but nervous for the new role," Kirsty said.

"Under the guidance of the faculty we began facilitating third and fourth year students to look at their studies from a practice and patient perspective. The students have a particular topic each week which unfolds as a patient presenting with a problem. They need

to begin thinking like a clinician, and hopefully I assist them to do just that," she said.

"I really enjoy the journey the students go on as they learn, and it's re-ignited my love of learning, as well as putting evidence-based practice front of mind for me. Sometimes it can be challenging to assist students with self-directed learning, and they do ask tricky questions from time to time!" Kirsty said.

We also asked Kirsty what she enjoys and what is challenging about her role working in corporate optometry.

"After 17 years working for a health fund I moved to a Specsavers practice closer to home, as I felt I needed to challenge myself again. It was a good opportunity to start fresh in a practice where patients didn't know me at all. It's a different socio-economic area, so I'm seeing more pathology and communicating with local GPs more," she said.

"Corporate practice can be different depending on the location. I remember a patient who was a nurse telling me as a joke to get out in the real world... and I feel I have! As an optometrist, I strongly believe that you represent yourself first and foremost, and that will flow through to the business you work for. That's where all optometrists have a common link, whether they work in independent or corporate practice," Kirsty said.

"I feel my two roles, at Flinders and in the practice, complement each other really well. I now work with two Flinders graduates, and they are fantastic! My colleague has taken a number of placements in his full time role, so I feel there is lots of overlap with the roles," she said.

We asked Kirsty why she is an OV/SA member and what she values about membership.

"I've been a member of the association since graduation, and I've always felt it's important to support the association

that will in-turn, support the profession. I highly rate their education programs, their staff who provide advice, their role in promoting the profession to government and other health areas, as well as their public awareness campaigns," Kirsty said.

We asked Kirsty what changes she's seen in the profession in the time that she's been practising.

"The first change I think of is the technology, OCT in particular, as well as advances in the treatment and management of age-related macular degeneration. Ortho K and the future of myopia control is moving forward with more studies and research, and I feel there is more public awareness of the role of optometrists as primary eye care providers. I remember as a young graduate that the profession was wanting to educate GPs about what we can do, it has happened slowly and I feel there is now more trust and liaison between the two," she said.

We asked Kirsty what inspired her to become an optometrist and what keeps her going now.

"In year 12 I went to a University of Melbourne Open Day, to look at the College of Optometry in particular. I was taken on a tour by Professor Alan Johnston (no relation), and it got me really interested in what optometry had to offer. I felt instantly at home at the College. Five months later I was there as a student. I found Professor Johnston and Professor Vingrys to be great role models," Kirsty said.

"It's great to now see female optometrists leading schools, researching and teaching, and this is another positive change that I've noticed. The young students and Flinders graduates I work with make me feel refreshed and motivated to be the best I can be in my profession. I have also made new friends at the University, so it has been all positive," she said.

MEMBER PROFILE

DEAN BINNS:
FINDING A SATISFYING WORK LIFE BALANCE

AFTER GRADUATING FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE IN 1990, DEAN JOINED A LONG-ESTABLISHED INDEPENDENT PRACTICE IN BALLARAT. TWO YEARS LATER HE WENT OUT ON HIS OWN, SETTING UP HIS OWN PRACTICE IN BALLARAT. DEAN JOINED SPECSAVERS AS A FRANCHISEE IN 2008, WHEN THE CORPORATE CHAIN WAS FIRST ESTABLISHING ITSELF IN AUSTRALIA. HE COMPLETED THE CERTIFICATE IN OCULAR THERAPEUTICS IN 2018, AND HAS RECENTLY BECOME A CLINICAL SUPERVISOR FOR DEAKIN UNIVERSITY.

Dean reflected on his decision to set up his own practice in Ballarat so quickly after graduating.

“At the time I thought I was talented and skilled enough to run my own practice, so I resigned and ventured out solo. In hindsight this was a gross mistake as I’d only had two years clinical experience and next to no business acumen, besides a crash course in basic book-keeping my mother taught me,” Dean said.

“For years the practice struggled however I knew it was important to keep advancing my business skills by studying various IT, business and management courses. One of these was the graduate certificate in business administration offered by Provision,” he said.

Provision is a group established by Optometry Australia to help support independent optometrists and their practices.

“Provision was a great group to join as they offered a range of services to the independent optometrist such as buying group discounts on purchases, and they help you run your business

and help train your staff. Plus you’re not tied into a franchise. Through Provision’s support I learnt to run my business effectively and successfully,” Dean said.

In 2008, Specsavers approached Dean to join as a franchisee.

“I was quite reluctant to join at first. However, even though I finally had the business running successfully, I was finding it hard to gain a work life balance. Finding the time to develop business plans and strategies, to keep up with all the accounting and tax obligations, pay wages, manage stock and everything else involved, while consulting full time, was difficult. However my greatest concern was that my work was starting to impact on the time I wanted to spend with my two young children,” he said.

“I was also concerned about the impending competitive market. I felt the Provision practices needed more uniformity to compete, that we needed to act as one. Members could choose whichever frames and contact lenses they wanted to sell, they could charge whatever prices they wanted, they could choose to bulk-bill or not. That’s really attractive to some optometrists, but I felt we needed more consistency,” Dean said.

Next year will be the tenth anniversary of Dean’s practice operating as a franchise.

“I’ve always been insistent my staff provide exceptional patient service. That combined with being able to offer a great product at a great price has been a real success for me. As a franchisee the company pays and trains my staff, and provides the best marketing I’ve ever seen. I never imagined seeing my business advertised on the hallowed turf of a Lord’s Ashes test. They also provide me with competitive health fund relationships and look after all the back-room administration of the practice. All that means I’ve been able to spend more time watching my kids grow up,” he said.

“Working as a franchisee enables me to spend more time doing exactly what I was trained to do: optometry. I’m able to concentrate solely on my patients and my optometry team yet still have control of the day to day workings of the business,” Dean said.

In 2016 two partners bought into the business and they opened a second franchise in Wendouree.

“We have seven full-time optometrists, and thirty-three support staff working across both practices. Both practices

have a general case mix of patients with no particular clinical focus. However, my patients who began seeing me in their forties, fifties and sixties are now in their seventies, eighties and nineties, so I’m exposed to a fairly broad range of age-related pathology,” he said.

We asked Dean why he’s a member of OV/SA and what he values about membership.

“Optometry Australia was around during my first days as a student over three decades ago. I think it’s important to maintain connections to an association that’s always supported me. They provide me with access to the latest information in industry standards and clinical practice. I passionately believe a collective voice is stronger than a single one and as such the association can act as a more effective advocate when lobbying on our behalf,” Dean said.

We also asked Dean about the sort of changes he’s noticed in the time he’s been practising.

“I often reflect on the changes in practice every time I mentor a young optometrist. It saddens me to see that young optometrists no longer have the exposure to optical labs, technicians and glazing that I have had over my career. For the majority of that time I’ve worked alongside some brilliant optical dispensers who have taught me so much about dispensing,” he said.

We asked Dean what inspired him to become an optometrist, and what motivates him now.

“My son enters year twelve next year. I remember at his age I had no idea what I wanted to do, but I had a brilliant physics teacher who taught me the basics of light and optics, and I was sold. I’m amazed that such a delicate organ like the eye is so essential to life. As opposed to other organs in the body a 1mm change in axial length or the smallest amount of trauma to a cornea, lens, retina or optic nerve can be so devastating to a patient’s sight and therefore their life,” Dean said.

“The thing that drives me most about being an optometrist is that we really do make a difference to people’s lives, whether it’s helping a child participate fully in their education or keeping an older patient independent. And occasionally we’ll see something that will save a patient’s life,” he said.

REGIONAL SEMINARS WELL SUPPORTED BY COUNTRY MEMBERS

The 2019-20 regional seminar series is focused on ensuring members get the most out of their therapeutics endorsement, while also providing insights on when to refer and why, and relevant information for members who don't have therapeutics. During November the seminar has been delivered in Traralgon in Victoria's east, Warrnambool in the state's south-west and in the Eyre Peninsula at Port Lincoln in South Australia.

Guest speaker and rural optometrist Richard Lenne has provided a case-based approach to the therapeutics refresher, highlighting factors that influence a decision to treat rather than refer a patient, as well as variances in the presentation of Herpetic eye disease and, the immediate and long-term complications of Herpes Zoster Ophthalmicus.

Participants received 6T CPD points (with assessment). The seminar was free for OV/SA members.

The seminars will again be delivered in the first half of 2020 in Mildura and Ballarat in Victoria, and McLaren Vale in South Australia. The seminars will also be held in Melbourne and Adelaide for metropolitan members.

Specific details, including how to register, will be available on the website and through direct emails to local members in early 2020.



Local members enjoying the regional seminar in Warrnambool.

ANTERIOR EYE AT THE MELBOURNE MUSEUM POPULAR WITH MEMBERS

There was a strong level of interest in the anterior eye seminar held at the Melbourne Museum in mid-November, with approximately 110 members attending on the night.

Guest speakers were clinician scientist and Senior Lecturer at the University of Melbourne Dr Laura Downie, and optometrist and Senior Clinical Teaching Instructor at the University of Melbourne, Tim Martin.

Laura's presentation focused on current insights and future perspectives regarding Dry Eye disease, while Tim spoke about the use of steroids in anterior eye conditions.

Participants received 6T CPD points (with assessment). The seminar was free for OV/SA members.



OV/SA members enjoying the seminar at the Melbourne Museum.



MEMBER EVENTS

'BLUE SKY PRESENTS: A DAY IN NOVEMBER' HITS THE RIGHT NOTE IN ADELAIDE

'Blue Sky presents: A Day in November' was the second one-day mini-conference to be held in Adelaide this year, and it certainly hit the right note with members who came from across South Australia as well as interstate.

The clinical theme of the conference was anterior eye. Guest speakers were ophthalmologist Dr Ben Connell, clinician scientist Dr Laura Downie and, optometrist and Senior Clinical Teaching Instructor Tim Martin.

The mini-conference format provided delegates with a full day of lectures that covered a wide range of topics from topography and dystrophies, to steroids use, to dry eye insights and future perspectives, and updates from the DEWS II research and resulting diagnostic toolkit. A case-study panel with all three speakers was also a highlight of the event.

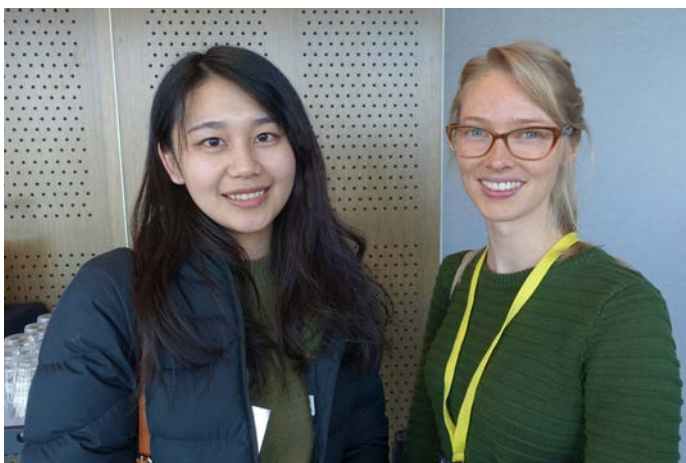
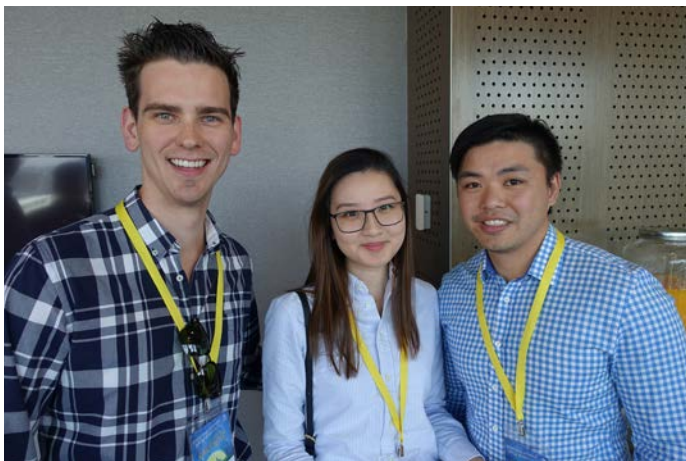
The mini-conference was emceed by Gary Edwards, and a fun theme of 'Follow the Yellow Brick Road' and musicals was a highlight of the event. Libby Boschen led the stretching exercises with delegates between each program break.

Participants received up to 18T CPD points (with assessment) for attending the full day.

The anterior eye theme continued through the busy trade fair, with each of the exhibitors providing relevant products and services for delegates to peruse.

CPR refresher training was provided prior to the conference lectures, with approximately twenty members taking advantage of the opportunity to update their certificate. Sundowner drinks at the end of the event provided a great opportunity for delegates to relax and network before heading home.

OV/SA thanks our sponsors who provided a terrific trade fair, the speakers who delivered such outstanding clinical content and the delegates who took time out of their busy schedules, to attend.



AUSTRALIA SHINES AT THE WORLD CONGRESS OF OPTOMETRY IN FLORIDA

In November representatives of the OV/SA secretariat and CPD committee attended the third World Congress of Optometry (WCO) in Orlando, Florida where it was formally announced that Australia had won the bid to host the fourth World Congress in Melbourne in 2021.

The key aims of attending the WCO were to generate delegate interest in the Melbourne 2021 Congress; to answer questions about Australia as a destination; to network and extend our knowledge about the requirements of the WCO and, to start the process of planning for 2021.

The trip was incredibly successful with around 500 expressions of interest obtained from delegates from around the globe. The Australian booth in the trade fair was very popular throughout the Congress, with the secretariat staff highly visible in their Akubra hats and outfits that displayed the Australian logo and branding. Give-aways of mini-koalas, magnets and other merchandise were

also very well received and attracted a lot of attention and good will.

The OV/SA secretariat and CPD committee have since met to start planning the 2021 event. While marketing and communications will be central to activities over the coming twelve months, behind the scenes planning around the structure and content of the clinical program, including the possibility of abstract submissions, potential event sponsors, speaker identification and decisions regarding operational aspects will all be a key focus.

To stay up to date on the latest announcements and key developments regarding the WCO and O=MEAG21, visit omega21.com.au to express your interest, and follow the prompts.

OV/SA thanks the World Council of Optometry and the Melbourne Convention Bureau who have supported the bid and activities in Orlando, Florida, and our key conference partner ODMA. We look forward to keeping members updated over the coming months.



OV/SA CEO Pete Haydon (on right) with outgoing World Council of Optometry President Scott Mundle (left) and incoming Council President Paul Folkesson (middle)



The OV/SA secretariat and CPD committee staff shine at the WCO

NATIONAL NEWS

'ASKING THE QUESTION' RESOURCE AIMS TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO EYE CARE SERVICES FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE

Indigenous Eye Health (IEH) at the University of Melbourne has released a new, national resource aimed at increasing engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients.

'Asking the question' is a simple resource that can be used on a reception or consulting desk, as a prompt to ensure that the question 'Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?' is asked. The triangular-shaped desktop resource is also supported by an 'Asking the question' information sheet.

Establishing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status by asking the question, can have a significant positive impact for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye health outcomes. As well as enhancing cultural safety, asking the question can ensure that patients can access appropriate pathways to care.

While there has been progress in reducing the eye health gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and other Australians over the last decade, there is still more work to be done. It's estimated that 94 per cent of vision loss amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples is preventable and treatable.

However barriers of access to, and utilisation of, services remain and are reflected in lower rates of eye examinations and treatments, and inequitable waiting times for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People compared with other Australians.

Other health professions are also working towards improving access to health care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Asking the question is recommended best-practice by a number of key medical and health organisations, including the Australian Indigenous Doctors Association and the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, who note this as a key element in establishing cultural safety in mainstream practices.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare recommends the use of this standard national question to identify, record and report the status of patients of health services. Improving reporting and monitoring of access to eye health services through identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status is an essential step to close the gap for vision.

Optometry Australia has supported the dissemination of the resource, along with RANZCO and Vision 2020 Australia.

The resources build on the work, resources and artwork of North East Healthy Communities and the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service.



MEDICARE AUDIT LETTERS FOR 2019

Optometry Australia has advised that Medicare will be sending letters to 158 optometrists across Australia where their Medicare billing practices have been flagged as different to that of their peers. This could be related to the use of specific items, or overall number of items billed.

The Medicare letter will note that the optometrist's billing patterns are different to that of their peers, and recommend that the optometrist review their billing practices.

Medicare are not flagging that further investigation of the optometrist's billing will be undertaken at that point.

However, they do invite the optometrist to voluntarily repay any instances of inappropriate billing and to contact the Department to explain their billing patterns.

Members who receive a letter are encouraged to contact Optometry Australia's optometry advisor help desk. Staffed by optometrists, the team can confidentially assist members to respond to Medicare, in the most suitable way.

The optometry advisor help desk can be contacted on (03) 9668 8500 or by email national@optometry.org.au



medicare

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Back row (L-R): From L-R: Rowan Prendergast, Murray Smith (National Director), Allison McKendrick, Anne Weymouth (Vice-President), Timothy Lo (Treasurer), Elise Pocknee-Clem (President), Cassandra Haines, Kurt Larsen, Jason Tan (Associate Director).

The Optometry Victoria South Australia Board welcomes discussion and input from our members.

If you have an issue or point of discussion you would like to raise with the Board, please feel free to contact President Elise Pocknee-Clem directly at e.pockneeclem@optometry.org.au

Alternatively you can reach individual Board members via the Optometry Victoria South Australia office on (03) 9652 9100 or email office.vicsa@optometry.org.au



SEASON'S GREETINGS FROM OPTOMETRY VICTORIA SOUTH AUSTRALIA



The Optometry Victoria South Australia office will be closed between 24 December and 6 January, however members can contact staff during this period by calling the office phone number (03) 9652 9100.

The staff and Board of Optometry Victoria South Australia wish all of our members a safe and happy festive season, and we look forward to working with you all again in 2020.