

OPTOMETRY AUSTRALIA ANNUAL REPORT

2019-2020

WE ARE HERE



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WHO WE ARE



Optometry Australia represents the largest community of optometrists in Australia. Because we are 100% owned by our members, no other organisation understands optometry like us or has a more influential voice. Since 1918 we have united the sector to make Australia a world leader in the delivery of vision and eye health services and patient care.

BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP

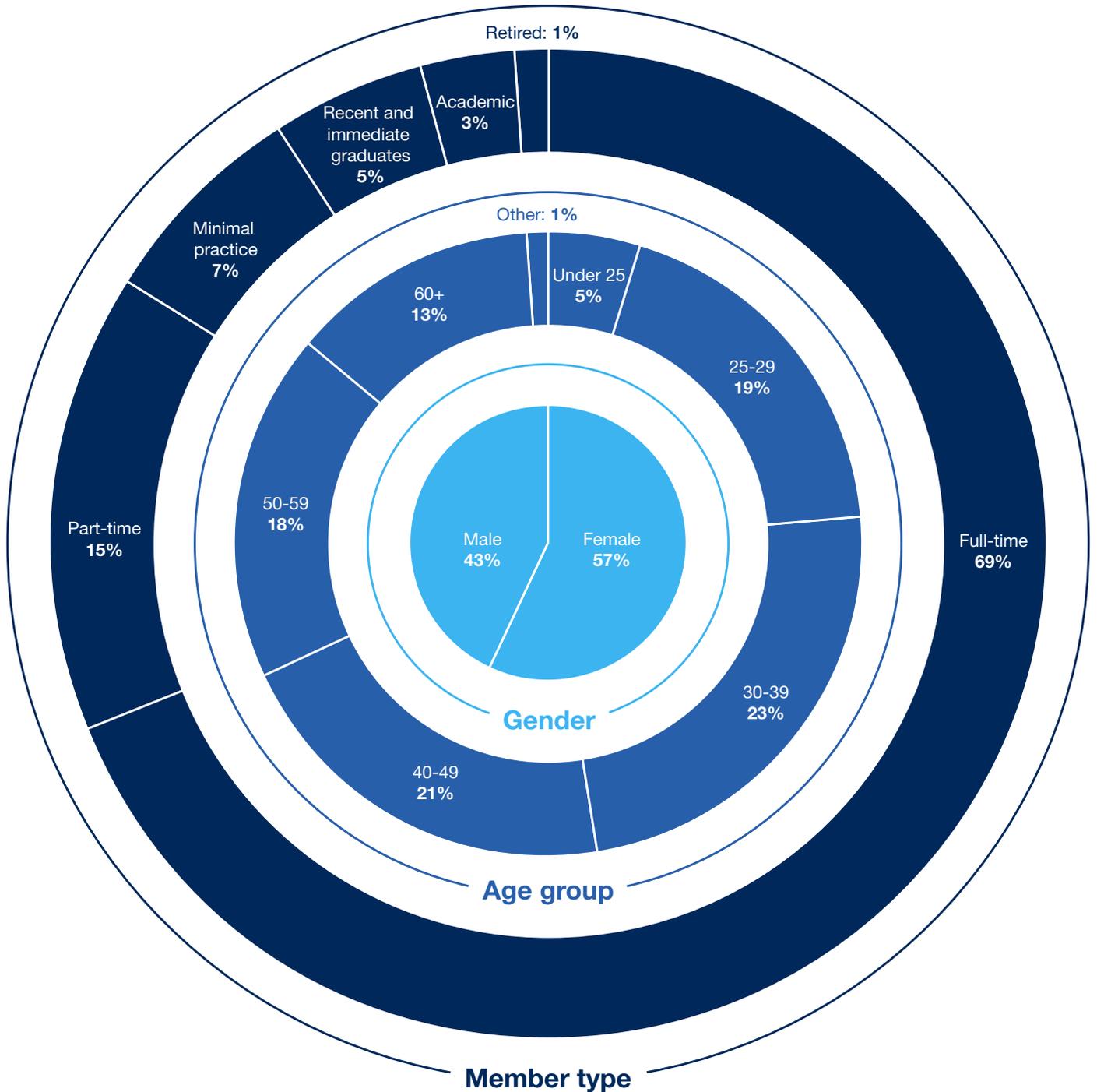
Membership means you are part of Australia's largest community of optometry professionals and because of this, you are never alone. We can provide the networks, support and guidance to help you succeed.

Our cover

In May, 60 members responded to our call-out to participate in a musical collaboration. Since its release in June, 'We are Here' has reached over 17,800 people online and been viewed 2,940 times on YouTube.



MEMBERSHIP SNAPSHOT FY2019/2020



Note: percentages have been rounded up or down

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS



SECTOR

9.21m

Medicare rebatable optometry services were delivered

\$436m

Medicare benefits paid to patients for optometry care

MEMBERSHIP

3%

Membership growth for FY2020/2021

94%

of members who have contacted our member advisory service felt they had been highly supported

6

optometrists employed in-house to guide advocacy programs, respond to government submissions, develop clinical and patient management guidelines, create education programs and deliver personalised member support services

85%

of all Australian optometrists represented by Optometry Australia

COVID-19 RESPONSE

9 organisations

including our five state divisions joined the Crisis Leadership Group to respond to the pandemic

50% discount

off FY2020/2021 membership fees, and fee payment moratorium, received a highly favourable response from 92% of members

7 months

of intense government lobbying to ensure clarifying guidance was provided to the profession throughout the national and Victorian lockdowns

90%

of members applauded our swift response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the support provided to them by Optometry Australia

63%

of members had no further recommendations on what services were missing to better support them

23,360

monthly pageviews of our COVID-19 resources hub

30 members

joined our team short-term to call all members on our behalf. 3,290 members (68.5%) answered their calls

3

infection control webcasts developed for members

60 members

joined the Optometry Australia choir to record 'We Are Here'

LEAD

6 months

free access to the Oculo telehealth platform offered to all members

1

major evolving scope of practice advancement with intravitreal injections mooted

4

projects underway aligned to Optometry 2040 strategy

200 members

attended our leverage disruption workshops

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS



ENGAGE

#1 digital destination for optometrists' CPD, the Optometry Australia Institute of Excellence, launched	1,440 members attended our inaugural <i>Optometry Virtually Connected</i> , the first virtual optometry conference and product showcase in the southern hemisphere	22 quality patient and clinical management accredited CPD webcasts delivered, each attended by an average 700 members
2 new travel scholarships launched to support research into optometric clinical and patient management and/or eye health disease	3 career advancement and mental health and wellbeing initiatives launched	2nd Student Leadership Program delivered and 5 th ECO Think Tank championed to support emerging optometry leaders
46.5% average open rate of electronic newsletters	5 new guidelines delivered on a range of clinical management subjects	62 jobs advertised monthly on our new Jobs Board
26,000 followers engaged on our social media platforms	1.918 <i>Clinical & Experimental Optometry's</i> record Impact Factor	550,000 <i>Clinical & Experimental Optometry</i> articles downloaded around the world from the Wiley Online Library

PROMOTE

\$400,000+ government grant secured to raise eye health awareness	6,800 <i>Good vision for life</i> stories shared	2020 Vision Index launched to provide insight into Australians' behaviour around eye health
6.86m optometry appointments potentially motivated by our <i>Good vision for life</i> campaign since September 2016	2 prestigious 2020 Silver Asia Pacific Stevie® Awards won for innovation in video	92% increase in national consumer coverage raising eye health awareness

ENDURING ORGANISATION

50% membership fee reduction supported from Optometry Australia's reserves	96% of staff satisfied with organisation's progress and successful outcomes (33% above benchmark)	25 staff members head home to work from 18 March 2020 without loss of productivity
4 all-staff training sessions held	0 occupational health & safety incidents	4 staff values awards presented
1 new revenue stream added via Jobs Board	Acknowledgement of Country embraced	

YOUR NATIONAL BOARD AND BOARD REPORTS

BOARD MEMBERS



Darrell Baker
President



Murray Smith
Deputy President



Gavin O'Callaghan
Treasurer



Kylie Harris
Director



Tori Halsey
Director



John Palassis
Director



David Bradley
Director



Margaret Lam
Director



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

There is a temptation to reflect on the past year and be overwhelmed by COVID-19 as it dominated so much of our lives. It is enormously rewarding however, to consider the year in totality and what we have achieved for our members.

The Optometry Australia Board puts our grassroots members 'front and centre' of all our decision making. In fact, every board paper within our meeting package has a clear statement noting 'Member Impact' so we can never lose sight of who we are serving. We also ensure we use evidence to support quality decisions. As optometrists we clearly understand the value of evidence and, as Directors, our philosophy is the same.

The Optometry Australia team continue to enhance our systems to gather data and analyse it to drive member-centric-service that is delivered in the most efficient way possible. Importantly, we listen to you and hear first-hand from you, your thoughts and concerns. The national office has approximately 10,000 emails and phone calls from members each year. This year we also employed a group of members to personally call each and every member to check that you were okay.

We also understand the value of data in the broader arena and continue our exploration in gathering patient and practice data that will take us on our journey to a sustainable and valued optometry profession.

I had the privilege during the year to address our Early Career Optometrist and Student leadership groups. As we lead the profession, these two groups remain in the forefront of our minds as what we do today will impact on them when they reach the peak of their career. We need to ensure in all our decision making that we have the right foundations in place for them to enjoy a profession that is recognised as integral to the health and wellbeing of the Australian community.

There have been a number of key achievements over the year many are noted in this report.

“The provision of quality CPD offers value that goes well beyond our members meeting regulatory requirements. It actually makes a difference in people’s lives and the health and wealth of the nation”

I will mention just a couple as they are core to the aspiration noted above in having strong foundations for the future.

The launch of the Optometry Australia Institute of Excellence supports members in continually improving their practise of optometry, enhancing patient care and ultimately, positively impacting on their ability to enjoy productive happy lives. The provision of quality CPD offers value that goes well beyond our members meeting regulatory requirements. It actually makes a difference in people’s lives and the health and wealth of the nation. The Institute of Excellence is also perfectly placed to support members though the forthcoming changes to the CPD requirements. During the year much focus was placed on developing innovative tools to ensure members need go no further than the Institute of Excellence and their state organisations for all their CPD needs.

We are well aware that the community does not have a good understanding of the value of optometry, often taking quality sight for granted. We have worked extremely hard to educate the public and our efforts and the importance of this work was recognised by the Federal Government when we received a substantial grant to expand activities in our *Good vision for life* initiative. When I personally handed our request to the Federal Minister for Health, Greg Hunt, last year, I admit to not being overly confident as it is rare for this kind of health promotion to be funded in this way. This funding has been very timely as we will be using it wisely over the coming months to build on the ever-increasing impact of *Good vision for life*.

I mentioned the value we place on evidence as it tells us where we have been and what we have done. It can also assist us to understand where we are going and what is likely to emerge.

Evidence is not only data but it can come from understanding current and emerging conditions. Based on leveraging disruption, last October the Optometry Australia Board had a session that considered this kind of thinking with the goal of being ahead of the game by taking advantage of disruption as a catalyst for change.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

To build our capability in this area, all the divisional Presidents joined the Optometry Australia Board at a second workshop in February, roughly six weeks before we all went into lockdown and experienced the largest disruption any of us will have ever faced in COVID-19.

We understood immediately the impact the pandemic would have on all of you, our members, and were able to respond swiftly.

The Audit and Risk Committee and the full board had numerous emergency meetings over many weekends and evenings, to consider initiatives to support the membership. Our first priority was to develop a member fee relief package, understanding the crisis would have a detrimental impact on you all financially. Borne from those meetings was the initiative to offer a 50% discount off FY2020/2021 fees, equating to six months free membership.

We quickly established the Crisis Leadership Group (CLG), inviting all divisional Presidents, CEOs, the Optometry Board of Australia and our New Zealand counterparts to be part of this group that would endeavour to navigate our way through uncharted territory and ensure members were supported and we had a strong and robust profession well into the future. The fee relief was one of the first decisions that the CLG endorsed and we were delighted to be able to work with the divisions and to collaborate financially to deliver this initiative.

This leads me to note my appreciation to our divisions, their Presidents, CEOs and staff for their commitment to you, our members.

The Optometry Australia Board welcomed Murray Smith last

July, and he assumed the role of Vice President late in 2019. He has been a great support to me, the Board and our CEO. We farewelled Karen Garner-Hamilton and Steve Zantos and welcomed Tori Halsey and Margaret Lam to the Board. I thank them all for their efforts and commitment to the organisation.

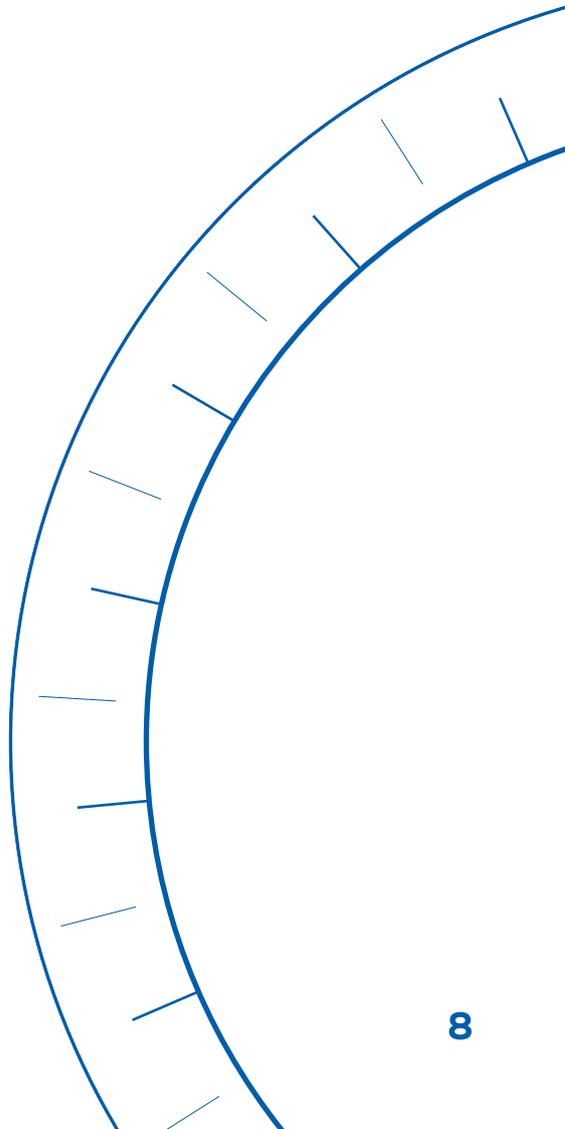
I would also like to acknowledge our CEO, Lyn Brodie and the amazing team at Optometry Australia. They always work tirelessly for the membership and this year, they went above and beyond especially in regard to the COVID-19 response.

“We understood immediately the impact the pandemic would have on all of you, our members, and were able to respond swiftly”

We have exciting times ahead and we will ensure we build on the knowledge and experience gained through this very tough time. We are a strong, resilient profession and I am truly privileged to serve as your President.



Darrell Baker
President





CEO'S REPORT

The test for any organisation is its ability to stay true to its mission and the beneficiaries it serves, amidst major disruption. This only happens with a committed and skilled board of directors and operational team.

We also need to have in place solid foundations and a flexible strategy in order to pivot and adapt quickly and decisively. Importantly, everyone must understand who we serve and never waiver from that focus.

I am privileged to serve both our membership and the Optometry Australia Board, and to lead an exceptional national operational team that is completely aligned in this focus. We are of course supported by equally committed teams across our federation which comprises our five state divisions.

The national office has continued in its quest to continually innovate and stay ahead of the game and you, our members, worked hard with us to develop the Optometry 2040 strategy – the 20-year transformational strategy for a sustainable and robust optometry sector. We are deeply committed to leading and supporting the profession to reach your preferred future.

Key initiatives supporting this long-term planning are detailed in this report. These initiatives are being developed by applying a strong evidence base and scouring national and international trends to continually progress the profession. In doing this, we can enhance access to quality eye care for the broad Australian community. It is so important to remind ourselves of the important role that optometrists have in the health of the nation.

Many of our exciting plans to celebrate optometry in the year 2020 were disrupted. Fortunately, we have adapted *Good vision for life* to maximise opportunities as jurisdictions come out of lockdown, with a further thrust of campaign activity early in 2021. Importantly, it is now a much-enhanced campaign with the support received from the Federal Government.

We are all breathing a sigh of relief as we exit lockdown and enter the phase of 'COVID normal'. There is no doubt however, that we will continue to

face economic and social challenges in the year ahead and the Optometry Australia team is continually assessing the situation to ensure we can be nimble and responsive to changes and challenges if, and when, they arise.

“We are deeply committed to leading and supporting the profession to reach your preferred future”

Importantly, we always look to how we can take best advantage of disruption to progress the optometry profession.

Our team is now spread across the country and we maximise our impact through collaboration with divisional staff, and I personally much appreciate the efforts of divisional CEOs and their teams.

I also have great support from our President, Darrell Baker, and the Optometry Australia Board.

Critically, I work with an exceptional operational team who always go above and beyond for our membership. Best of all, I get to work with our membership; an extraordinary group of dedicated health professionals.

Lyn Brodie
CEO



TREASURER'S REPORT

Optometry Australia was highly productive in a challenging financial year, with a budgeted loss reported in the profit and loss.

This was expected as our budget included many COVID-19 assistance initiatives including supporting members with the 50% discount off their FY2020/2021 membership fees as well as other visionary projects funded from excess reserves.

The portfolio, managed by First Financial, returned -7.10% net of fees, outperforming the ASX200 return of -10.89%.

The organisation's forecast negative budget position for FY2019/2020 was fully realised. This result was on budget and was due to a combination of tight budget constraints, sensible financial management and monitoring through monthly reporting to the organisation's Finance Committee, Audit and Risk Committee and the Optometry Australia Board.

Operating results

Our most recent biennial member survey cited that the top benefits of membership are professional indemnity insurance, representation to government, access to continuing professional development and community awareness programs. These benefits are the responsibility of Optometry Australia, with the delivery of continued professional development shared with our state divisions. This is a pleasing outcome given that 79% of Optometry Australia's income comes from membership fees contributed from members via the state divisions, and it shows diligence in spending these funds for maximum benefit of grassroots members.

Through active pursuit of advertisers and potential financial partners this year, our organisation was able to secure additional external revenue – including sponsorship of our webinars, advertising on our website and in our publications and through our Advantage Program – with the aim of maintaining and improving the services from which members benefit.

Overall expenses for the year were contained to budget. Examples of cost containment include the organisation's meeting and travel expenses which have been reduced with an increase in the use of video and telephone conferencing.

Total expenditure on salaries came in close to budget. The organisation's budget also contributed \$100,000 to assisting our smaller state division in Tasmania deliver services to members in line with Optometry Australia's State Support Funding Policy.

Statement of financial position

This statement reflects the financial position of Optometry Australia. For FY2019/2020, there was a decrease in total equity for the year of 33%. This figure is reflective of the decrease in the organisation's investment portfolio value offset by the operating loss generated.

The asset allocation policy establishes the investment parameters for the organisation's investment portfolio managed in cooperation with First Financial. The organisation maintains a balanced portfolio, allocating 23% to defensive assets and the remainder in equities and managed investment funds. This diversification provides a risk-based approach to the portfolio while still allowing opportunity for the realisation of increased investment returns. Over the investment cycle these returns have historically been higher than investing these funds in standard bank accounts or term deposits.

Optometry Australia maintains a set level of reserve funds that ensures sustainability and surety for the future. Excess funds were expended on the 50% discount off FY2020/2021 membership fee initiative and other visionary programs that provide direct member benefit.

The organisation's cash holdings are down 9% from last year. The decrease in the cash position is as a result of spending funds on member-centric projects whilst continuing with careful spending and investing surplus funds in high yielding cash investments.

Financial management and the future

As noted above, Optometry Australia has a significant portion of its assets in shares and managed funds. This position is monitored closely at each Optometry Australia Board meeting and by the board's Finance Committee.

We supplement this advice with regular reports from an independent business advisor who supports the organisation's assessment of the investment portfolio's performance. The Finance Committee comprises the Treasurer, President and Vice-President of the Board, the National Chief Executive Officer and National Chief Financial Officer, as well as an external independent business advisor, Whiterose Professional Services.

TREASURER'S REPORT

As a member-based organisation, the Optometry Australia Board is acutely aware of the need to support the state divisions so that they can provide the services members require to meet the growing primary eye health and vision care needs of patients, while remaining within our financial means.

We continue to manage our finances conservatively, with this financial year seeing further investment in member services, including the Federal Government sponsored marketing campaign *Make this your year of good vision for life*, which encourages consumers to visit their optometrist.

“Our most recent biennial member survey cited that the top benefits of membership are professional indemnity insurance, representation to government, access to continuing professional development and community awareness programs”

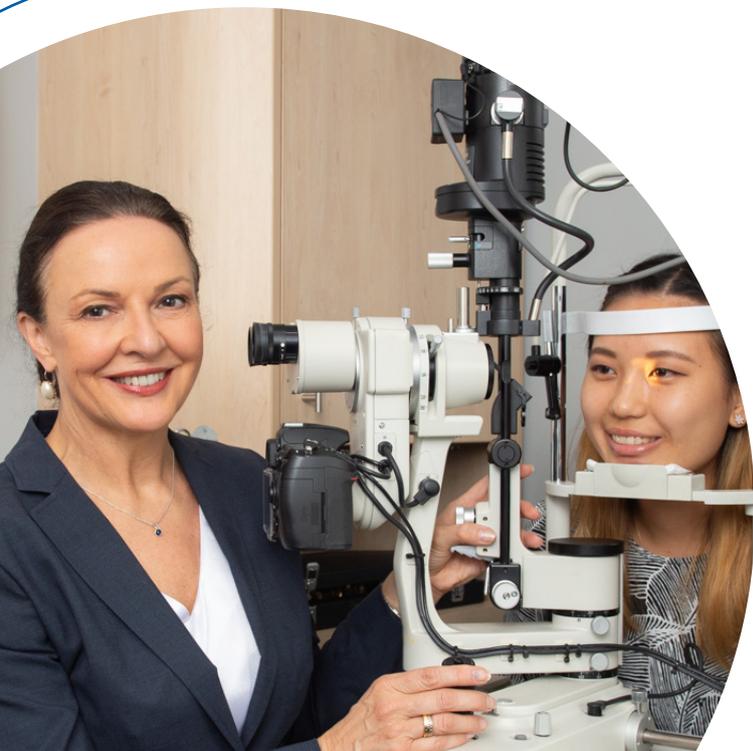
The year ahead

During the year ahead, FY2020/2021, Optometry Australia will:

- continue to support members through the COVID-19 pandemic;
- deliver the Optometry Australia Learning Plan, and other initiatives to help members meet the Optometry Board of Australia's new CPD requirements;
- continue the delivery of the awareness campaign, *Good vision for life* under the theme: *Make this your year of good vision for life*;
- deliver key member engagement services and benefits including professional indemnity insurance;
- continue to identify additional external revenue sources;
- deliver quality CPD through the Optometry Australia Institute of Excellence including webinars on topics of interest to members;
- deliver *Optometry Virtually Connected* and our new *Optometry Connection* publication;
- deliver the Student Leadership Program;
- deliver the ECO Think Tank;
- continue to enhance human resources and legal support for all members;
- deliver key projects to the benefit of all members, ensuring we grasp the opportunities identified in the Optometry 2040 transformational strategy for optometry.



Gavin O'Callaghan
Treasurer



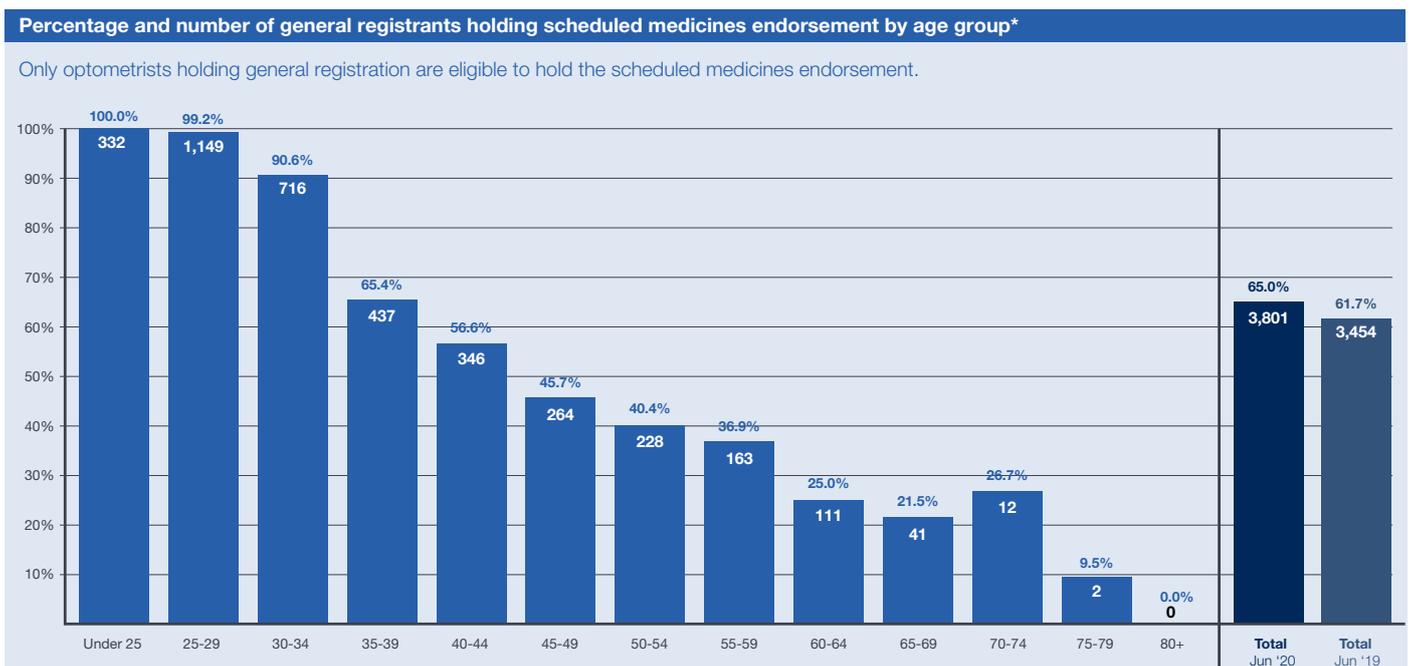
YOUR SECTOR IN NUMBERS

During the year under review 9.21 million Medicare rebatable optometry services were delivered by 5,870 practising optometrists. Rebatable services fell by 7% due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Medicare benefits paid totaled \$436 million, down 5%.

Principal place of practice										
Optometry practitioners	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	No PPP**	Total
Registration type										
General	94	1,954	39	1,177	368	110	1,570	446	89	5,847
Limited: Postgraduate training or supervised practice	2	4		4	1		2	7	2	22
Limited: Teaching or research					1					1
Non-practising	2	43		28	1	1	32	4	62	173
Total	98	2,001	39	1,209	371	111	1,604	457	153	6,043
Total as at June 2019	91	1,933	35	1,143	346	103	1,521	444	165	5,781

Endorsement										
Scheduled medicines***	59	1,094	30	746	268	87	1,230	259	28	3,801
% of general registrants endorsed for scheduled medicines	62.8	56.0	76.9	63.4	72.8	79.1	78.3	58.1	31.5	65

Gender split										
% Female	56.1	58.2	56.4	54.5	55.8	47.7	57.7	47.0	52.3	55.9
% Male	43.9	41.8	43.6	45.5	44.2	52.3	42.3	53.0	47.7	44.1

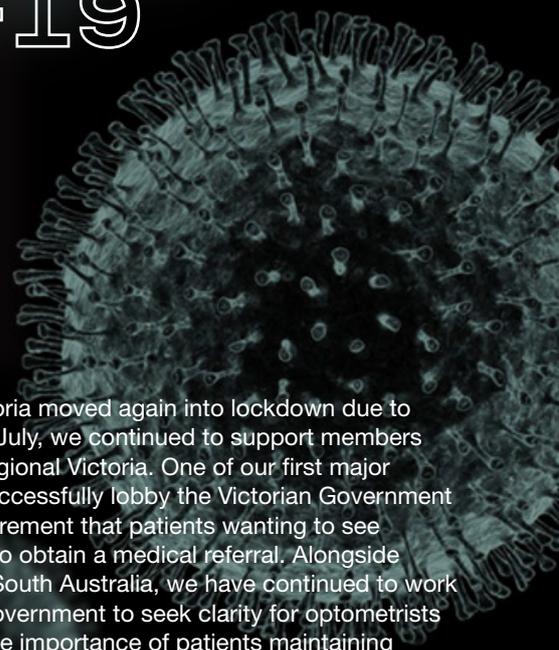


* Source: AHPRA, June 2020 data

**NPPP – No principal place of practice

*** Only optometrists holding general registration are eligible to hold the scheduled medicines endorsement

SUPPORTING YOU THROUGH COVID-19



Optometry was hit by the full brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic with Medicare rebatable consultations significantly dropping by 7% in FY2019/2020 compared to FY2018/2019.

Research commissioned by Optometry Australia also confirmed that 90% of all optometry practices reported closing or scaling back to urgent care and telehealth only in April/May 2020 at the height of the Australia-wide lockdown. Consequently 93% of all optometry employers and 79% of employees applied for government financial assistance and 11% of employee optometrists were unemployed. A second poll in July indicated 8% of members remained unemployed.

For Optometry Australia, assisting members through these unprecedented times became our priority with the majority of staff diverting their attention to providing critical member support. An essential component of our response was providing members with the right information to make informed decisions under extreme social and economic conditions.

Our swift and proactive reaction to engaging with, and supporting members through the delivery of a comprehensive range of programs, highlight the tangible benefits of membership like never before. Ninety percent of members cited that they were well-to-highly supported by Optometry Australia through the pandemic and 63% had no further commendations on what services we could have initiated to better support them.

The following details our main initiatives.

Crisis leadership

Optometry Australia took an influential leadership position in responding to COVID-19, establishing a Crisis Leadership Group in March comprised of Australian and New Zealand executives from peak optometry bodies to guide the profession through the pandemic.

Advocacy response

In the lead up to Australia going into lockdown on 22 March 2020, Optometry Australia started to lobby the Australian government on the status of optometry as an essential health service. As nation-wide restrictions were introduced, clarity was urgently needed about whether optometrists, who provide essential eye health services, could continue to provide their standard scope of care to patients. Of great concern was the welfare of Australians managing eye diseases that if left untreated, could progress to blindness. Through ongoing consultation with key government advisors, Optometry Australia was able to clarify guidance for optometrists and optometry practices.

Likewise, when Victoria moved again into lockdown due to the second wave in July, we continued to support members in Melbourne and regional Victoria. One of our first major outcomes was to successfully lobby the Victorian Government to overturn the requirement that patients wanting to see an optometrist had to obtain a medical referral. Alongside Optometry Victoria South Australia, we have continued to work with the Victorian Government to seek clarity for optometrists and to emphasise the importance of patients maintaining access to eye care.

Membership fees discounted

Understanding that the Australia-wide lockdown would have a significant impact on members' financial wellbeing, on 6 April in conjunction with all state divisions, we announced a 50% discount off all FY2020/2021 membership fees with an October or December payment moratorium, depending on the state division. This equates to six months free membership. The fee reduction, partially funded from national investment reserves, has ensured no impact to member services and was cited as highly valuable by 92% of members.

Telehealth

To ensure that patients had ongoing access to vital eye health consultations, in early April we provided members with access to a six-month free-subscription to Oculo, a cloud-based health professionals' platform offering secure videoconferencing and instant clinical information sharing. We further distributed advice on private telehealth fee structures along with guidelines and free telehealth tools for those optometrists providing this service for the first time.

Find an optometrist

We updated our *Find an optometrist* search functionality to guide consumers searching for an optometrist, to those members providing urgent care and/or telehealth.

Information dissemination

To support members in making informed choices we continued to focus on the provision of information including:

SUPPORTING YOU THROUGH COVID-19

- (1) Launching in March a dedicated COVID-19 online hub, populated with comprehensive advice and guides on infection control, clinical and patient management, telehealth, business continuity, human resources, patient marketing and financial assistance programs. This open-access hub is continually updated with advice from the World Health Organization, World Council of Optometry and other leading global and national health bodies in relation to combatting COVID-19. Optometry Australia made the decision to open-up the majority of this hub to the benefit of all optometrists and their patients. The hub attracts over 23,360 pageviews monthly – around 10% of all web traffic.
- (2) The dispatch of COVID-19 specific communications on a wide range of topics from infection control to patient marketing. Our information channels include our website, electronic newsletters, news blog, social media platforms and video messages. Altogether our COVID-19 electronic newsletter opening rates sit over 70% and our videos have been viewed almost 5,800 times. Seventy-three percent of members endorsed our pandemic communications as being highly valuable.
- (3) We created and distributed to members in both electronic and print form, comprehensive guidelines on COVID-19 infection control and commissioned an urgent review of our full infection control guidelines, last published in *Clinical & Experimental Optometry* in 2017. The Chief Clinical Officer presented three webcasts on infection control in both open and member-only forums, and we distributed numerous supporting communications via electronic mail and on our website. We also provided information on using and obtaining personal protection equipment, which in the early part of lockdown was in short-supply.

Expanded personalised advisory service

While our Optometry Member Advisors have continued to provide one-on-one personalised support to members, we expanded this team at the height of the first wave of the pandemic and co-opted specialists in financial advice, accounting and tax, legal and human resources to support members with individualised advice particularly around government employment and support programs, and rental and mortgage assistance.

Mental health and wellbeing

The mental health and wellbeing of members was of particular concern to us. In May we employed 30 members short-term to contact all members on our behalf to check how they were doing and to encourage them to complete a COVID-19 Impact Survey. Over 3,290 members answered (68.5% of calls) with 88% citing they were 'travelling okay' with the majority appreciative of the contact from Optometry Australia.

Ongoing advice about mental health and wellbeing has played out strongly in our communications with specific newsletters on the subject and various helpline numbers advertised widely on our website and newsletters. A webinar was also held to help members identify and triage patients suffering from mental health issues. And in August we provided all members with complimentary access to the Resilience Box, an online comprehensive mental health resource, as well as access to a mentoring program and career coaching program.

Super-sized CPD program

With face-to-face learning unviable, to assist members achieve their mandatory CPD education commitments, we super-sized our regular program of accredited webcasts delivering three a month during March-July. Seventy-nine percent of members nominated this program as highly valuable.

In addition, we brought our inaugural virtual conference and product showcase – *Optometry Virtually Connected* – forward from December to June 2020, to provide a multi-day forum of live and on-demand education. The first of its type in the southern hemisphere, this event was very well received with 88% of optometrist delegates and 77% of exhibitors saying they would likely attend a future OVC.

Disruption workshops

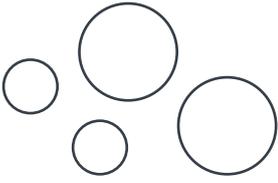
Aligned to our Optometry 2040 strategy we supported a series of leveraging disruption workshops in May/June to empower practice owners in particular, to embrace the pandemic as a catalyst for change to reshape their practice, patient and clinical management.

Fun-filled activities

To provide a joyful focus during a period of high stress for many, in May 60 members responded to our call-out to participate in a musical collaboration. Since its release in June, 'We are Here' has reached over 17,800 people online and been viewed 2,940 times on YouTube.

We also invited members to Optometrivia, a fun trivia night hosted by Alan Brough, regular panelist on ABC's *Spicks and Specks*.

YOUR STRATEGIC PLAN



LEAD

By 2021, sustained effort by Optometry Australia and optometrists will position the profession to meet the growing eye health needs of the Australian community

- Lead membership through market and sector evolution change
- Facilitate greater access to optometry services by segments of the Australian community not accessing, or under-accessing, optometry services
- Develop, support and promote professional standards
- Facilitate members of the profession to work to their full scope within systems that acknowledge their role, to better meet community need

ENGAGE

By 2021, optometrists are equipped and supported to meet the growing eye health needs of the Australian community

- Inspire collegiality in membership
- Deliver and promote an essential suite of member services delivered efficiently and effectively
- Demonstrate the importance of membership of Optometry Australia

PROMOTE

By 2021, Optometry Australia will be the authoritative voice driving and facilitating the improvement of community eye health and vision care

- Position Optometry Australia as a recognised authority in relation to eye health
- Increase public awareness, knowledge and understanding of the role of optometry in eye health in Australia
- Influence the wider eye care and health care sectors to support and promote the role of optometry

ENDURING ORGANISATION

By 2021, Optometry Australia is a nation-wide team working cohesively to support the delivery of better eye health and vision outcomes for the Australian community

- Drive performance and efficiencies, and reduce duplication
- Listen, collaborate and speak as a united voice

LEAD



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- Crisis Leadership Group quickly established
- Ongoing communication with key government advisors ensures clarifying guidance provided to the profession throughout the national and Victorian COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns
- With our state division, successful lobbying of Victorian Government sees medical referral decision overturned
- 200 members attend leveraging disruption workshops
- Medicare Benefits Schedule Review Taskforce recommends optometrists be considered to undertake intravitreal injections
- Telehealth take up strongly supported
- Competency standards review well advanced
- Big data project underway to develop endorsed patient collection criteria

A CLOSER LOOK

Given the attention that has been focused on COVID-19 in 2020, it is a good reminder when reviewing projects and activities in the advocacy space, to look at the scope of work that Optometry Australia has delivered or influenced during the whole financial year under review.

Some of this work, particularly involving policy change, has bridged several years as we continue to wait for outcomes to be announced whilst others have required a more intensive and immediate response as has been required throughout the pandemic.

Pandemic leadership

Crisis Leadership Group

In March 2020, we took a leadership position on behalf of the federated organisation in responding to COVID-19, establishing a Crisis Leadership Group (CLG). This group brought together all national board members, the national CEO, all divisional Presidents and CEOs, the chair of the Optometry Board of Australia and the Optometrists and Dispensing Optician Board of New Zealand and the CEO of the New Zealand Optometrists Association with the objective of guiding the profession through the pandemic.

The CLG met weekly at the height of the first wave lockdown in Australia and then from mid-May as required.

One of the first decisions made by the CLG was to endorse the 50% membership fee discount offered to all members by all divisions. Equating to six months free membership, this offer was highly valued by 92% of members.

Urgent advocacy

In March 2020 as nation-wide restrictions were being introduced, clarity was urgently needed about how these would impact optometry practices and the scope of care they were able to provide for patients. Of great concern was the welfare of Australians managing eye diseases that if left untreated, could progress to blindness. Through ongoing consultation with key government advisors, Optometry Australia was able to pass on to members greater guidance at each stage of the evolving restrictions.

Likewise, we worked closely with Optometry Victoria South Australia to successfully lobby the Victorian Government to overturn a requirement for patients wanting to see an optometrist to have to obtain a medical referral, with continued pressure applied for this state government to provide clarity for optometry practices and for patients to access the care they needed.

Leveraging disruption

In May 2020, around 200 members participated in a series of online workshops aimed at stimulating discussion and action on how to embrace disruption, such as that presented by the pandemic, as the catalyst to implement positive change in practice, clinical and patient management processes. These 2020 workshops followed similar ones held in 2019.

LEAD



Optometry 2040

In 2019 Optometry Australia commenced rolling out initiatives to support Optometry 2040, a project that saw us work with world leaders in futures studies and consult with members and other stakeholders, to identify preferred and realistic futures for optometry. The resultant strategy defines the 20-year roadmap for a sustainable and successful optometry sector.

What Optometry 2040 made clear is that optometry must continue to evolve to meet the needs of our communities.

As part of this project and to help steer the profession towards its preferred futures, Optometry Australia has committed, among other things, to work with the profession and key stakeholders to consider how the scope of optometric practice can be optimised to ensure effectiveness and efficiency of the eye health care system. To this end we have, as below, convened an Evolving Scope of Practice Advisory Group, we are working with stakeholders to review the entry level competency standards for the profession, and we are pursuing opportunities to collate data from across the profession.

Telehealth

Optometry Australia has led the sector to expand into this important area by providing six months of free access to the telehealth platform Oculo during the pandemic and by providing guidelines and tools to assist members implement telehealth in practice.

Throughout the pandemic we continued to lobby the Federal Government for telehealth to be included within the Medical Benefits Schedule (MBS) for optometry. Whilst this recommendation has yet to be actioned, we have strongly encouraged members to offer telehealth services to patients and to charge a private fee for these consultations.

We recognise telehealth as an important complement to face-to-face care for patients who do not have ready access to in-person care – such as in rural and remote locations or as we have just experienced, in a pandemic situation.

We will therefore, continue to advocate for telehealth as an important aspect to improve community access to optometry. With patient satisfaction with tele-optometry a key prompt for government decision making around the future of Medicare support for telehealth, to provide this evidence we invited members to survey their telehealth patients.

Optometry Australia has also convened a group of optometrists to advise on the development of a comprehensive set of guidelines regarding what contexts it is appropriate to provide telehealth and also, how to maximise the value of a telehealth consultation. This work is due for completion in late 2020.

Evolving scope of practice

Optometry Australia formed an Evolving Scope of Practice Advisory Group in October 2019 under the stewardship of Chair, Professor Sharon Bentley.

The group of 12 optometrists, researchers and academics are supporting Optometry Australia in identifying priority areas for evolving optometry to provide better community care such as via intravitreal injection and more effective use of optometrists in public health care pathways.

Optometry Australia is also working closely with our Victorian/ South Australian and Western Australian divisions to support greater integration between optometry and public ophthalmology and the results of consultations to date are being shared with other divisions within our federation.

Competency standards

A committee formed by Optometry Australia to review and update the entry-level competency standards for optometry graduates in Australia, met for the first time in September 2019 with the goal to ensure that graduate competency standards last set in 2015, reflect contemporary and emerging practice.

The committee includes representatives from Optometry Australia, optometry schools, OCANZ, the New Zealand Association of Optometrists, New Zealand's Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board, and consumer representatives with extensive experience in public health policy.

Since 1993 Optometry Australia has led the world in setting graduate competency standards to reflect the attributes and skills that an optometrist needs as they enter the profession. The standards form the basis for assessment of optometry courses and assessment of optometrists trained overseas.

Big data

In the first half of FY2019/2020 we commissioned a consultancy group to undertake a proof of concept for the development of a national optometry dataset. This consultancy is working with a small number of practices using Optomate and Sunnix platforms to explore how key research questions that provide greater insight on the role of optometry in population eye health and eye health journeys, can be answered. The goal is to develop a national dataset that is regularly updated and which informs advocacy, program development and quality improvement at a practice level.

LEAD



MBS Review

As announced in 2018, the MBS Review Taskforce (MBSRT) is currently undertaking a significant review of MBS with the optometry schedule being assessed by the Optometry Services Clinical Committee (OSCC). In May 2019 we reported being pleased with the OSCC's initial recommendations as they reflected many of our suggestions to reform MBS to benefit optometrists and community eye health care.

In December 2019 we made another submission to the MBSRT positively endorsing their recommendation in relation to ophthalmology items, that optometrists be considered and supported to provide treatment using intravitreal injection.

Our submission highlighted evidence of unmet patient needs and of non-ophthalmology health care providers providing safe and effective intravitreal injections as treatments for aged-related macular degeneration and diabetic eye disease. We emphasised further exploration of models of care that may make effective use of optometrists. Optometry Australia indicated to RANZCO and the Australian Society of Ophthalmologists our interest in working collaboratively to enhance patient access to intravitreal injections in a manner that upholds patient safety.

Whilst final adoption of the MBSRT recommendations has been stalled due to the necessity of dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, we are optimistic that a positive outcome will be soon announced.

Fair Work Australia

During the year we have been assisting the Fair Work Commission (FWC) in their review of awards in the health sector. This comes after the Fair Work Ombudsman (FWO) announced that practice staff, including optical dispensers and other retail staff, now fall under the Health Professionals and Support Staff (HPSS) Award 2010. While we wait for the commission to deliver clarity on this issue, we have recommended that practice owners and managers consider a risk minimisation approach of benchmarking their support staff against the HPSS Award to determine whether they are better off overall compared to the General Retail Award. This is particularly pertinent given the rise in high profile 'wage theft' cases of employers receiving significant fines from FWO for underpaying staff.

The FWO has agreed with an interim submission by Optometry Australia that optometry practices can be considered 'private medical practices' for the purposes of applying the Span of Hours clause in the HPSS Award. A hearing date for our submission has been delayed.

Members can now access a range of award classification resources from the website and complementary assistance from our HR lawyers Industry Legal Group to assist them with their decision making in relation to practice staff wages.

University places campaign

In response to signals that a new school of optometry was opening at the University of Western Australia, we raised our concerns with the university and re-invigorated efforts to campaign for community need to be centrally considered in federal government funding of university places. This resulted in a member-led campaign that saw over 570 members send almost 1,200 advocacy emails to the Federal Minister for Education. Whilst this campaign highlighted our concerns about over-supply of optometrists within Australia, the university's plans are proceeding with the school scheduled for opening in 2021.



ENGAGE



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- Career development programs introduced
- 30 members employed to phone all members on our behalf to see how they were travelling as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Mental health and wellbeing support services introduced
- New dedicated Jobs Board launched
- Access to personalised member services expanded
- Institute of Excellence now the primary digital destination for CPD
- Regular program of quality webcasts launched
- *Optometry Virtually Connected*, Australia's first virtual conference and product showcase, launched
- Social media engagement platforms increase to four
- *Clinical & Experimental Optometry's* Impact Factor jumps to 1.918

A CLOSER LOOK

Optometry Australia delivered a range of engaging member initiatives during the year either as a result of our swift response to COVID-19 or as part of our usual membership engagement program planning and delivery. Whilst details of our response to the pandemic are highlighted on pages 13-16 of this report, we summarise below those initiatives introduced and that are a staple, or will now become an essential component of our tangible member offer.

Career development

Coaching and mentoring

This year Optometry Australia provided members with complimentary access to career coaching and mentoring designed to support their career development particularly during, and in a 'COVID normal' world.

One-on-one coaching sessions are facilitated by optometrist and career coach, Lisa Jansen. Sessions are designed to assess participant's strengths whilst building confidence, self-awareness and resilience.

Lisa also delivered a member-only webcast earlier in 2020 on the topic: 'Optimal strategies for physical and mental wellbeing'.

Optometry Australia's mentoring program has been developed to enable members to access support from their peers so that they can grow their professional careers and extend their experience within optometry. Utilising an online platform, mentors and mentees are matched based on the mentor's experience and skills and the mentee's career aspirations.

Travel scholarships

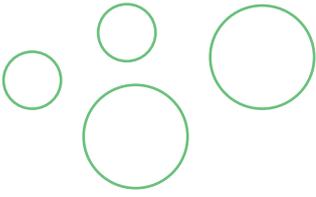
In early 2020 we announced the recipients of our inaugural scholarship programs introduced to enable Australian optometrists to investigate advancements in overseas markets of optometric clinical and patient management and/or eye health disease.

Originally planned to enable recipients to travel abroad, Nicola Mountford and Shelley Hopkins will now complete at least 50 hours of desktop research and remote engagement with international colleagues in topical areas of interest to Optometry Australia. Nicola will focus on expanded scope of practice in the USA and Shelley will consider optometry's role in assessing children's vision conditions through vision screening by comparing programs across the USA, UK, Europe and Asia.

Student leadership

In February 2020 we held our second Student Leadership Program inviting 12 final year optometry students from all six Australian universities to Melbourne for two-days of intensive leadership training. The program is aimed at bringing together like-minded students and equipping them with the tools and resources needed on their leadership journey throughout their careers.

ENGAGE



Early career leadership

We also supported our Early Career Optometrists (ECOs) fifth Think Tank – a day program that brings together leaders from our state-based early career networks, to share experiences, to input into strategy and to develop leadership skills. In 2020 this meeting was held virtually and ECO participation highlighted mental health and wellbeing of young optometrists as key areas for action with burnout and the difficulty of practising under the COVID-19 pandemic identified as the priorities.

Jobs board

In December 2019 we launched a dedicated Jobs Board for members to search for new employment opportunities. This popular platform supported 250 employment vacancies or wanted advertisements between December and April 2020. Whilst listings then plummeted due to COVID-19, listing volume started to regain momentum in July.

Mental health and wellbeing

In May 2020 we engaged 30 members to contact all members on our behalf to check how they were doing and to encourage them to complete a COVID-19 Impact Survey. Over 3,290 members answered (68.5% of calls) with 88% citing they were 'travelling okay' and with the majority appreciative of the contact from Optometry Australia.

Our COVID-19 Impact Survey however, highlighted that 46% of members were anxious about their future, 61% believed it would become increasingly difficult to find employment as an optometrist and 76% were concerned that salaries would be compromised due to over-supply.

We responded to these concerns with the introduction of our mentoring and coaching programs and we have also provided all members with complimentary access to the Resilience Box, an online comprehensive mental health resource that provides a range of tools and resources designed to strengthen a person's mental resilience and wellbeing.

Advice about mental health and wellbeing has also played out strongly in our communications since the pandemic commenced with specific newsletters on the subject and various helpline numbers advertised widely on our website and newsletters.

Personalised member support

We support members with individualised advice via our Optometry Advisor Help Desk service. We employ three optometrists and an additional two employees who personally respond to an average 525 member calls and emails a month. Advice is tailored to each member's query and provided on a wide range of subjects from Medicare to private health insurance, from PII to human resources, CPD and parental leave.

Almost 94% of members who have used our service said that they felt they had received information to meet their needs.

We also provide members with access to third parties that provide complimentary professional services such as legal, human resources and finance advice, and through our Advantage Program, access to discounts off a raft of professional and consumer goods and services.

Continuing Professional Development

Institute of Excellence

Optometry Australia launched its Institute of Excellence in August 2019. This online portal was created to meet members' learning needs and it is now the primary digital destination for quality, professional education, attracting some 10,000 pageviews a month. With all of the Institute of Excellence's online courses accredited, members can access a growing catalogue of quality CPD and have their CPD points automatically uploaded against their profile for courses undertaken.

We were pleased to also provide New Zealand optometrists access to our online CPD.

The Institute of Excellence also supports the sector's most comprehensive nationwide calendar of events and CPD courses searchable by date, location, topic, cost and provider. This calendar is open-access and attracts some 14,000 pageviews monthly.

Webcasts

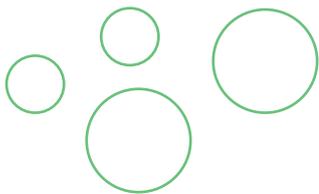
With a strategic goal to deliver quality CPD aligned to what our members want, from 2019 Optometry Australia commenced rolling out a regular program of accredited webcasts delivering one a month on a range of clinical and patient management topics and featuring subject-matter experts and optometry luminaries. Held after hours, more than 700 participants on average, attend each webcast highlighting the appetite for this type of convenient learning.

Optometry Virtually Connected

Originally slated for December 2020, we brought *Optometry Virtually Connected* (OVC) forward to 26-28 June 2020. This initiative – the first of its type in optometry in the southern hemisphere – combined a virtual conference and product showcase.

The event attracted 1,440 member delegates (32% of all members) and 63 New Zealand delegates as well as 23 exhibitors who were keen to present their products and services to optometrists in an environment where face-to-face trade shows were not possible. This event was very well received with 88% of optometrist delegates and 77% of exhibitors saying they would likely attend a future OVC.

ENGAGE



Delegates were able to participate in a comprehensive program of live and pre-recorded webcasts presented by Optometry Australia as well as exhibitors. Each of our four live webcasts attracted an average 900 attendees and our seven on-demand webcasts, 230 delegates each.

Pharma

Pharma again delivered 24 CPD points, including therapeutic points, across all four issues. With Clinical Editor Kerry Hart on parental leave, we welcomed two guest Clinical Editors this year. Dr Angelica Ly from the Centre for Eye Health joined the March 2020 editorial team, and Roman Serebrianiuk of Vision 2020, the June editorial team. We warmly thank them for their contribution to, and clinical guidance on these issues.

This year *Pharma* was supported by a range of supplements and inserts with the very popular Contact Lens Resource Guide delivered with the September 2019 issue. The Occupational Optometry Guide was distributed with the March 2020 issue while the June 2020 issue carried three supplements: a desktop resource to encourage optometrists and practice staff to ask patients if they are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin; an Infection Control and COVID-19 Factsheet; and our annual *Equipment* publication.

Moving to hours-based learning

With CPD moving from a rolling two-year, accredited points-based system to an annual system based on hours from 1 December 2020, we focused considerable attention during the year on developing the resources members will require to transition to this new way of learning. We have also readied the Optometry Australia Institute of Excellence to automatically capture hours, instead of points, against member's profile.

Guidelines

Optometry Australia released a new guideline for the treatment and management of glaucoma during the year, another on child myopia standard of care and a third on falls prevention. We also released the comprehensive Contact Lens Resource Guide, the Occupational Optometry Guide and an infection control guideline. The organisation further updated our guidance on visual fields requirements for patients accessing blepharoplasty from a plastic surgeon and published AMD guidelines in the May issue of *Clinical & Experimental Optometry*.

In June 2020 we announced that we had begun developing a clinical practice guide for optometrists regarding the diagnosis, management and pre- and post-operative care for cataracts. We have also convened a group of optometrists to advise on the development of comprehensive guidelines for telehealth provision and consultation.



Member communications

During the year we kept members informed via our multi-channel communications program incorporating regular electronic newsletters, news stories and publications offering a wide range of information, practical tips and tools on such topics as major Optometry Australia initiatives, practice and clinical management guidelines, advocacy outcomes, major member and sector news, education programs and member services and benefits.

Focus, Your Education, Your Advantage, Special Announcements, *Pharma* and *Clinical & Experimental Optometry* make up our regular and popular member newsletters with each achieving an average opening rate of 46.5% (industry average is 14%). We further upload on average three member-centric news stories each week which are subsequently profiled on our social media platforms and within our fortnightly Focus newsletter.

Central to our member communications is our website with our current platform in operation since 27 May 2019. Traffic to the website remains high with almost 235,000 users for the 1 July 2019-30 June 2020, including 5,500 member users who periodically return to the website. This is evidenced by members spending on average 20.7 sessions each compared to other visitors who spend 2.13 sessions each. Altogether, members achieved 667,560 pageviews with total visitor pageviews sitting at just over 2.0 million.

We now support five social media pages including two Facebook pages, an Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn account. We have high engagement amongst our 26,000 total followers.

Peer-reviewed journal

Our peer-reviewed journal, *Clinical & Experimental Optometry's* (CXO) profile grew during the year with a huge jump in its Impact Factor to 1.918, up from 1.559 in 2018. This is the largest annual increase in the journal's history and is due to an increase in researchers citing CXO published research within their own work. The journal is now ranked equal fifth in terms of Impact Factor in the ophthalmic journals.

The quality of papers motivated 7,062 institutions globally to subscribe to the journal – up from 6,044 the year before. Downloads of articles increased by almost 16% to around 550,000 and just over 400 articles were submitted for review during the year.

This year Konrad Pesudovs became the 14th recipient of the prestigious H Barry Collin Research Medal for his outstanding contribution to research as a clinician/scientist. This medal, along with the J Lloyd Hewett Outstanding Paper award, are both linked to CXO.

PROMOTE



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- Major government grant secured to strengthen eye health message delivery
- 6.86 million appointments potentially influenced by *Good vision for life* campaign since launch
- *Good vision for life* stories shared 6,800 times
- 2020 Vision Index launched to provide broad insight into eye health perceptions of Australians
- Year 2020 campaign pivots to *Make this your year of good vision for life*
- Consumer media coverage increases 92%
- Extensive SEO projects raises profile of consumer website
- Ability to book an appointment on our website expands via Luxottica brands
- 2 major international awards for video excellence secured

A CLOSER LOOK

With 2020 looming, in the second half of 2019 Optometry Australia secured strong support from across the eye health sector to promote this as the year of good vision for life. With 20/20 being a well-known term often attributed to perfect vision, and good vision a key factor for living a healthy, happy life, the year 2020 represented a significant opportunity for a consistent, collaborative year-long consumer eye health campaign.

To support the concept, we developed a toolkit to promote the campaign, including a 2020: year of *good vision for life* badge created to dovetail into existing optometry brand hierarchies, along with marketing support ideas to motivate consumer awareness and patient appointments.

To kickstart the year-long campaign in January, Optometry Australia launched the 2020 Vision Index, a broad insight into consumer perceptions about their eye health including topics such as regularity of visiting an optometrist, driving, nutrition, glasses, contact lenses, children's vision, computer usage and beauty. The results of this research, conducted in November 2019, were to be used to generate substantial publicity in consumer media, as a basis for stories published on goodvisionforlife.com.au, consumer newsletters and social media and to bolster the campaign marketing toolkit.

Simultaneously a social media campaign based on the #LookCloser concept was launched in January to encourage consumers' participation in a photograph competition. Eleven social media influencers were engaged to extend this campaign execution to their combined 1.6 million followers.

Whilst the 2020 campaign commenced strongly, all activity was halted in March as the COVID-19 pandemic took hold and Australia went into lockdown on 22 March.

Recognising the benefit of promoting eye health to consumers as an important health issue, in April 2020 the Federal Government awarded Optometry Australia a grant exceeding \$400,000 to be used for consumer promotional purposes aligned to the 2020 theme. The government has now agreed to extend delivery of grant activities until 30 June 2021 enabling us to pivot campaign deliverables to a new, but strongly aligned theme: *Make this your year of good vision for life*. Sector partners have supported this change and welcomed new campaign assets with revised delivery from October 2020.

Good vision for life

The *Good vision for life* campaign, launched in September 2016, continues to raise awareness of the role of eye health amongst consumers and the need to see an optometrist regularly throughout life. The campaign call to action to make an appointment to see an optometrist for an eye examination, encourages visitation to the *Good vision for life* website.

In a market that saw a significant 7% drop in Medicare rebatable eye consultations as a result of the pandemic, pleasingly our campaign may have motivated 1.5 million Australians aged 18 years and over to make an appointment to see an optometrist this year. Since its launch, 6.86 million Australians claim to have made an appointment to see an optometrist due to our campaign.

PROMOTE



The four-year culminative total represents an increase of 6% since its commencement.

Pleasingly in the same four-year period, there has been a 35% increase in Australians who would see an optometrist first for such conditions as excessive watering and redness of eyes, now sitting at 3 million, and a 22% increase in those who would see an optometrist first for loss of vision, now sitting at 5.9 million. Additionally, the number of Australians who now think they should see an optometrist annually has increased 27% to 9 million.

Reaching as many consumers as possible with eye health messages is critical to what we do. During the year we extended the *Good vision for life* social media presence to Instagram to capture attention of consumers engaged on this popular platform, bringing our total followers on this site and Facebook to over 6,600.

We further engage with more than 3,000 consumers who subscribe to our monthly e-newsletter and we regularly post informative, appealing stories on a variety of eye health topics on our campaign website (goodvisionforlife.com.au). In the past 12 months these stories have been shared over 6,800 times – an increase of 56% on the previous year.

We further embarked on an extensive search engine optimisation project to improve rankings and searchability of goodvisionforlife.com.au. The results of this project have seen a 135% growth in organic visitation to the site and increased exposure within Google search results placing the site prominently within 240,000 monthly searches.

Find an optometrist updated

Our *Find an optometrist* search function, which is embedded in both the consumer website and corporate website (optometry.org.au) was updated during the year.

In responding to the need for patients, particularly those with existing eye health conditions and diseases, to be able to access optometric care during COVID-19 lockdowns, we updated our *Find an optometrist* search function to highlight optometrists offering urgent and telehealth care that were within proximity of the patient.

To enable consumers to book an appointment online this year we extended our booking capabilities to include Luxottica group optometry practices including OPSM and Laubman & Pank networks.

Major awards

Optometry Australia secured two prestigious Silver 2020 Asia Pacific Stevie® Awards for innovative use of videos.

Announced in early July, the 'Innovation in the use of video' Stevie® was awarded for the way we use video to refine message delivery in a visually appealing manner, showcasing our catalogue of internally created member and consumer videos. The second Stevie® for 'Innovation in organisational image', was awarded for our depiction of what optometry could look like in 20 years. The Stevie® Awards are widely considered the world's premier business awards and the Asia Pacific Awards are the only business awards program to recognise innovation in the workplace in all 29 nations of the Asia Pacific region.

Media coverage

During the year we delivered a substantial overall 78% increase in media coverage within national and international media outlets including consumer and sector-specific channels. Overall consumer-related media increased 92% from 193 to 371 articles and corporate media coverage, 52% from 69 to 101 articles. Altogether, this media coverage, along with social media interaction and share of voice, had the potential to be seen by 60.71 million people.

Kids vision, general eye health topics and eye health dangers such as fake contact lens use, were the top three subject matters in consumer media.



Too much screen time?

Get some green time.

ENDURING ORGANISATION

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- 50% membership fee reduction partially supported from Optometry Australia's reserves
- 90% of members cited that they were well-to-highly supported by Optometry Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Establishment of the Crisis Leadership Group in response to COVID-19
- 96% of staff satisfied with organisation's progress and successful outcomes (33% above benchmark)
- High outputs continue as all staff head home to work from 18 March 2020
- Four all-staff training sessions held
- Low staff turnover
- No occupational health & safety incidents
- Staff values award introduced
- Jobs Board adds new revenue stream
- Prudent financial management
- Reconciliation Action Plan – Innovate RAP, submitted to Reconciliation Australia

A CLOSER LOOK

Assisting members through an unprecedented 2020 became the priority for all staff with their efforts recognised as highly valuable by 90% of members who cited that they were well-to-highly supported by Optometry Australia through the pandemic and 63% had no further commendations on what services we could have initiated to better support them.

During April, at the height of the Australia-wide lockdown, 10% of members reported contacting our Optometry Advisor Help Desk, supported by our Chief Clinical Officer, two optometrists and two operational staff. Of these calls, 33% pertained to employee entitlements, 29% on the JobKeeper program and 20% on patient management and infection control. To bolster our in-house team, we co-opted specialists in financial advice, accounting and tax, legal and human resources to support members with tailored advice around government support programs, rental and mortgage assistance. A substantial number of members utilised these services.

The height of the pandemic also saw us respond quickly with a dedicated COVID-19 hub on the website. To ensure that patient care was a priority, Optometry Australia made the decision to provide open access to the majority of this information-packed hub. As a result, the hub attracts over 23,360 pageviews monthly with an incredibly low 0.06% bounce rate, highlighting the importance of hub's information.

Throughout the pandemic to ensure that our members had the information they needed to make informed choices, we distributed sometimes twice daily COVID-19 specific news, advice, guidelines and tips with each electronic newsletter achieving an average 70% open rate.

We further took an influential leadership position in responding to the pandemic, establishing a Crisis Leadership Group in March comprised of Australian and New Zealand executives from peak optometry bodies to guide the profession through the pandemic. This ensured consistent messaging to our members and the opportunity to exchange concepts and experiences with our New Zealand colleagues and the regulator.

All this was achieved by staff who have been working remotely since 18 March 2020 with contact with colleagues achieved through regular video meetings, phone calls and emails.

ENDURING ORGANISATION

Our people

On December 18, 102 years ago a group of optometry leaders had the vision to form a national professional body that would lead, engage and promote optometry, optometrists and community eye health. We have continued to endure strongly over the past century and today we attract and retain a highly engaged team dedicated to serving our profession and ensuring that Australians are able to access the very best in eye care. The organisation is immensely proud of our team not only for the way they so positively and proactively responded to ensuring members were well supported during the pandemic, but because our staff have always put members first in all that we do. Our mantra: *will it add value to members?* – drives all that we do.

Flexible work environment

Optometry Australia supports a flexible work environment to engender good work/life balance and that allows for full-time, part-time and shared-role positions. Whilst the majority of our staff are based in Melbourne, as a national organisation we have a commitment to employ the best person for a role irrelevant of where they live – hence we have team members, including contractors and divisional staff on secondment, in Canberra, Adelaide, Perth and Sydney.

“Our mantra: will it add value to members? – drives all that we do”

Our philosophy is to enable staff to work from home for a portion of their working week where the need exists.

Staff survey

The 2020 staff survey again highlighted that Optometry Australia is exceeding comparable association, professional and peak body benchmarks in relation to engagement, wellbeing and progress benchmarks.

In relation to overall job satisfaction, 87% of staff said they are engaged (13% above benchmarks); 81% said they felt well at work and able to manage job stress (9% above benchmarks); and 96% of staff indicated they are satisfied with the organisation’s progress and success in delivering outcomes (33% above benchmarks).

Survey results also highlight that staff understand the organisation’s purpose; they embrace our leadership and are respectful of their co-workers.

They also feel that they have a voice and are able to participate in the organisation’s direction.

Given the organisation is small with a relatively flat structure, career progression was the main area of concern for staff and our Staff Engagement Working Group are determining ways, when practical, to remedy this area.

Staff training

All staff are afforded the opportunity to participate in training programs to further their career development and to provide the skills Optometry Australia needs to perform to its optimum. During the year this included four group training sessions including:

- With bullying and harassment in the workplace a major and rising governance risk for Australian businesses, all staff participated in a two-hour workshop of this topical subject delivered by the Australian HR Institute.
- Staff participated in a self-paced learning program to identify and respond to cyber-threats particularly manifesting in emails, websites and apps as well requests to share personal information.
- Staff from our Western Australia and Victorian/South Australian divisions joined the national team in attending a Strategies for Maintaining Wellbeing & Productivity while Working from Home & Beyond webcast presented by Lisa Jansen of Infinite Clarity Coaching. The hour-long webcast gave tips for coping with stress, distraction and loneliness when working from home as well as how to set daily routines, boundaries and work/life balance prioritisation.
- All staff, along with all divisional staff, participated in a workshop to learn how to employ a continual strategy-in-action framework, building capability in leveraging disruption. This framework, developed by consultancy company Resilient Futures, is also being used by a cross-divisional working group to create the organisation’s FY2021-2024 strategic plan.

Member advisory staff also undertook essential mental health first aid training to ensure that they are better equipped to handle calls with distressed members.

“The height of the pandemic also saw us respond quickly with a dedicated COVID-19 hub on the website. To ensure that patient care was a priority, Optometry Australia made the decision to provide open access to the majority of this information-packed hub”

ENDURING ORGANISATION

Staff movements

In January we saw the departure of Communications Manager, Rhiannon Riches and the appointment of Natanael Bloch as National Communications Manager. Natanael had been acting in this position whilst Rhiannon was on parental leave. We also welcomed Nicole Ostrogney to the Optometry Australia team as our Events Coordinator. Many members would know Nicole from her many years at Optometry South Australia.

This year has seen the part-time secondment of Optometry Western Australia CEO, Evan MacRae to the national team. Evan fulfilled the important task of liaising with financial, accounting and taxational specialists to support COVID-19 member advice and communications. He will remain on secondment as we explore alternative and innovative revenue streams, utilising his skills and experience in this area.

We welcomed Kerry Hart back from parental leave during the year, resuming her role as Policy & Standards Advisor and Clinical Editor, *Pharma*.

In March we saw the departure of our Business Development Manager, Michael Schiller.

Staff values program

This year we continued awarding our quarterly staff-nominated recognition program. Each quarter staff are encouraged to nominate a colleague who they believe best demonstrates the organisation's FIRST values – forward thinking; integrity and respect; responsive and accountable; strategic vision; teamwork. The staff member who receives the most nominations recognising their values' behaviour, receives a certificate of appreciation.

Occupational health and safety

Optometry Australia takes its commitment to providing a safe and healthy workplace seriously. No major incidents were reported during the year involving staff, visitors or contractors.

We also work with a professional agency to ergonomically assess staff workstations and our OH&S Committee are diligent about assessing building conditions to ensure staff welfare is not impeded.

Reconciliation Action Plan

Our Reconciliation Action Plan – Innovative RAP was submitted to Reconciliation Australia in August.

Our plan, aligned with the three core pillars of relationships, respect and opportunities, was developed by an internal working group to support the national reconciliation movement. All board and staff meetings now commence with an Acknowledgement of Country with staff encouraged to understand and acknowledge the Traditional Custodians and Owners of the land where they live.

Staff were also encouraged to participate in various activities marking National Reconciliation Week 2020 and we published three stories related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on our website which were featured in our fortnightly member newsletter Focus, as profiled on social media.

Financial management

As highlighted in the Treasurer's report, prudent financial management remains a priority for the organisation. It is also our goal to expand our income stream through a range of initiatives.

50% membership discount

To support you, the national board joined all divisional boards in rallying to offer all members a 50% discount on their fees for FY2020-2021, with no fees payable until October or December, depending on the state division. This equated to six months free membership. The fee reduction/free membership was applicable to all membership categories nation-wide. Importantly, no member services have been impacted as a result of the fee reduction and it was highly valued by 92% of members.

“Staff were also encouraged to participate in various activities marking National Reconciliation Week 2020 and we published three stories related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on our website”

Optometry Australia has always been diligent in managing our investments to ensure that funds were accessible in case of an emergency situation.

Jobs Board & classifieds

In December 2019 we launched a dedicated Jobs Board which now attracts an average 62 vacant and wanted positions each month. Whilst listings plummeted in April due to COVID-19, listing volume started to regain momentum in July.

ENDURING ORGANISATION

Members can place a positions vacant advertisement for free if they are seeking work for themselves while businesses can take advantage of very competitive rates starting at \$35 and rising to \$125 per listing.

Likewise, members can place an advertisement in our classifieds for free with non-members paying \$55 per listing. Listings range from those wanting to sell, lease or buy optometric equipment as well as those wanting to sell, lease or buy a practice or to lease or rent a room within a practice.

Advantage Program

The Advantage Program was established a number of years ago for the dual purpose of providing a great range of products and services to members at discounted prices, as well as to generate income through commission on sales or advertising packages. We are aligned with organisations providing energy, finance, legal, human resources and workplace relations, insurance, finance, marketing and IT and lifestyle products and services.

Members have responded well to the new Your Advantage monthly newsletter which highlights specific deals available just for them.

Advertising

We provide several channels that carry advertising and promotions on behalf of organisations wanting to promote their products and services to the largest community of optometrists in Australia. Our website, range of electronic newsletters and publications provide our main vehicles for carrying messages from sponsors and partners.

Cross-federation communications

In March, we took a leadership position on behalf of the federated organisation in responding to COVID-19, establishing a Crisis Leadership Group. This group brought together all national Board members, the national CEO, all divisional Presidents and CEOs, the Chair of the Optometry Board of Australia and the Optometrists and Dispensing Optician Board of New Zealand and the CEO of the New Zealand Optometrists Association with the objective of guiding the profession through the pandemic.

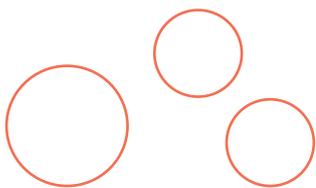
A cross-divisional working group made up of national and division board members and CEOs is also developing the organisation's FY2021-2024 strategic plan.

A cross-divisional working group is also responsible for the ongoing evolution of the member database platform.

This year we continued to keep our state divisions informed of national activities through our monthly LEAP newsletter which is distributed to all federation staff.



COMMITTEES



Committee participation as at 30 June 2020

Committee	Purpose	Representation lead
Optometry Board of Australia's (OBA) Regulatory Reference Committee	Peak group of the sector providing views to Optometry Board of Australia	Lyn Brodie
Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency's Professions Reference Group	Provides feedback, information and advice on strategies for building better knowledge from within the professions about health practitioner regulation, and advising Ahpra on issues affecting the professions	Lyn Brodie
OCANZ member	To appoint the OCANZ Board and other governance matters	Lyn Brodie
Indigenous Eye Health Data Report Advisory Group	Advice to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare regarding development of a report on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye health	Skye Cappuccio
National Rural Health Alliance	Peak advisory and advocacy body for rural health matters	Sarah Davies
Vision 2020 Australia	Vision 2020 Australia represents the vision and eye care sector in Australia and draws together members to exchange views, share information and collaborates and develops policies, strategies and submissions to improve eye health and vision care for all Australians	Lyn Brodie, Prevention and Early Intervention committee; Anthea Cochrane, member of Independence and Participation committee; Skye Cappuccio, member of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Committee. Optometry Australia representatives are also involved in a number of Vision 2020 Australia project and working groups.
Allied Health Professions Australia (AHPA)	AHPA is the peak national organisation for allied health professions in Australia, representing and advocating for the role of allied health professionals in our health system	Lyn Brodie; Skye Cappuccio
Government-appointed		
Department of Veterans' Affairs Health Consultative Forum	Provide principal global advice on areas impacting on optometry and issues consistent with other primary and allied health sectors	Skye Cappuccio; Kerryn Hart

WORKING & ADVISORY GROUPS

Working & Advisory Group participation as at 30 June 2020

Working group name	Members	
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health Working Group	Gary Cerie (Chair) Mitchell D Anjou OA Daryl Guest Prof Brian Layland OAM Anna Morse	Dr Genevieve Napper Lisa Penrose Helen Summers Ben Hamlyn
Evolving Scope of Practice Advisory Group	Prof Sharon Bentley (Chair) Assoc Prof Nicola Anstice Dr Lauren Ayton Luke Cahill Mark De Paola Jane Duffy	Garry Fitzpatrick Jason Holland Dr Christopher Law Dr Jack Phu Dr Amanda Sobbizadeh Robyn Weinberg
Glaucoma Clinical Practice Guide Working Group	Kerryn Hart (Chair) Ben Ashby Sandra Au Alan Burrow Cameron Dyson	Cassandra Haines Graham Lakkis Leanne Nguyen Jack Phu Murray Smith
Infection Control Standards Working Group	Kerryn Hart (Chair) Luke Arundel Dr Nicole Carnt	Ka-Yee Lian Prof Fiona Stapleton
MBS Review Advisory Group	Stuart Aitchison Mario Basso Garry Fitzpatrick Paul Graveson Simon Hanna Jason Holland	Isabelle Jalbert Paula Katalinic Peter Murphy Christine Nguyen William Trinh Michelle Waugh
Medicare Schedule Advisory Group (MSAG)	Simon Hanna (Chair) Luke Arundel Skye Cappuccio Paul Graveson Daryl Guest	Peregrine Horton Heidi Hunter Margaret Lam Jason Tan
Standards Australia Working Group	Annette Hoskins David Stephensen Nicole Carnt	
Optometry Australia Transport and Vision Standards Working Group	Amanda Douglass Tony Gibson Vanessa Honson Jennifer Long Josiah Murphy	Neil Murray Sharon Oberstein Ho Wah Ng Joanne Wood

CONTACT US

CONTACT DETAILS

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Consumer website: goodvisionforlife.com.au

Optometry Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which our organisation is located and where we conduct our business.

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Facebook members: facebook.com/OptometryAustralia/

Facebook consumers: facebook.com/goodvisionforlife

Twitter: twitter.com/OptometryAus or @OptometryAus

LinkedIn: linkedin.com/company/optometrists-association-australia/

Instagram: @goodvisionforlife

Optometry Australia ABN: 17 004 622 431

