

Strategic Plan

2018-2021

Report Card



Optometry Australia 2018-2021

Strategic Plan

Our vision ▶ Driving excellence in eye and vision care – realising better eye care for everyone

Our mission ▶ Our mission is to unite, lead, engage and promote optometry, optometrists and community eye health

Who we are ▶ We are the member-based professional organisation that actively strengthens, supports and promotes the profession of optometry and eye health, on behalf of all optometrists

A period of future proofing

During the 2018-2021 strategic period, we focused on you, our members, by delivering projects and building frameworks to future proof optometry in Australia. Of utmost importance to us was not only ensuring that optometrists are well placed to meet changing community eye health and vision care needs, but that optometrists are well positioned to take control of their future. Whether this is through intensive advocacy to government to support our evolving scope of practice, ensuring that members can access contemporary education aligned to current clinical and patient management, or through our efforts to promote eye health to consumers, we have always made sure that our primary focus has remained on creating a sustainable and robust optometry sector that can absorb future shocks, stresses and disruptions.

At the same time, we concentrated on strengthening our already comprehensive range of member services to ensure that we are delivering the support that members need in relation to clinical and practice management and professional development. This has seen us introduce a range of new member initiatives such as an expanded member advisory service, new clinical guidelines and resources, publications, events and resilience and wellness and profiling programs to our portfolio of services. We have also strengthened our communications and engagement channels and tools to deliver information to our members even more quickly and efficiently.

Organisationally, we continued to implement processes to streamline our overheads, such as restructuring our operations, closing underperforming ventures and reducing duplication, with the goal of diverting funds to member service delivery. We prudently managed our finances which enabled us to financially support members during the COVID-19 pandemic when many were financially pressured.

Our staff have always been our greatest asset and we are constantly delighted that they too find working for Optometry Australia and leading, engaging and promoting optometry, optometrists and community eye health and vision care, such a rewarding experience, as evidenced by our annual Employee Satisfaction Survey results.

This report card reflects the major achievements that our organisation has delivered over the past three years. It represents an extensive list of amazing outcomes which we are very proud to have accomplished for our members and on behalf of the optometry sector.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darrell Baker".

Darrell Baker
President

Lead pillar - what we set out to achieve

Eye health is vital to individual and community health; a strong voice leading the profession will create an ideal environment for the profession to meet community eye health and vision care needs.

Our lead aspiration

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

Our lead goals

- (1) Optometric services will be remunerated appropriately as measured by increased Medicare patient rebates and member feedback highlighting increases in non-Medicare examination income.
- (2) Private Health Insurers will implement rules relating to rebate systems and process consistently across providers and in ways that supports billing ease for optometrists.
- (3) The optometry service market will have expanded for the benefit of the community as measured by increases in the provision of optometric services; expanded scope of practice; and enhanced collaboration between optometrists and hospitals that is resulting in better access for patients and more sustainable systems for managing progressive eye disease.
- (4) There is an appropriate workforce strategy operating nationally as measured by the removal of optometry from the skilled occupation list; evidence that universities are considering community need in relation to student intake; the implementation of more flexible work arrangements within optometry practices; and collaboration across the sector to take control of the future of optometry within Australia.
- (5) Our members will be maintaining their high professional standards with static-year-on-year AHPRA/OBA notifications and professional indemnity claims; and the introduction of new methodology to capture continuous quality improvement clinical data from members will enable professional standards tracking.

lead



Our lead achievements

Remuneration

- Concerted effort secured the removal of the MBS indexation cap one year earlier than scheduled, and saw indexation reintroduced in July 2019, after a seven-year hiatus.
- In 2020 we supported more optometrists to provide telehealth services for patient care during COVID-19 lockdowns by offering six months' free access to the Occulo digital patient management platform.
- Optometry Australia led the sector's response to the Medicare Benefits Schedule Review Task Force (MBSRTF), working intensively to ensure favourable outcomes for optometrists. The final recommendations however, are not expected to be released by the Government until 2023.
- We have provided successful submissions to the Fair Work Commission (FWC) in their review of awards in the health sector to voice our concerns that inclusion of optometrists in the Health Professionals and Support Staff (HPSS) Award would drive down optometry wages.
- Significant resources and a webcast on private billing were added to the member only section of the website to assist in boosting member's non-Medicare income.

Evolving scope of practice

- In recognition of the benefits of a broader scope of practice, the MBSRTF recommended optometrists be considered to undertake intravitreal injections. Whilst the Government has not yet released a response to these recommendations, stakeholder discussions continue regarding the role optometry can play in supporting enhanced access to treatment with intravitreal injections.
- In 2018, we delivered Optometry 2040, the 20-year transformational roadmap for the evolution of optometry in Australia and the key changes that are required to create a sustainable and rewarding optometry profession where optometrists are in control of their future.
- Throughout 2019 and 2020, members attended a series of workshops on leveraging disruption. These workshops, designed to support the evolution of optometry as identified in the Optometry 2040 strategy, were timely given the unforeseen disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic which has continued unabated since March 2020.
- In FY2019/2020 we commenced progressing a concept for the development of a national optometry dataset with the goal of providing greater insights into the role of optometry in population eye health and eye health journeys. Such data is urgently needed to better inform our advocacy efforts, program development and quality improvement at a practice level.

Clinical and practice management guidelines

- Clinical and practice management guidelines and standards are important to establishing a consistent level of patient management and during the period under review, we produced, or updated, a range of recommendations on a wide range of eye health issues. These included such topics as anterior eye conditions, diabetes, the treatment and management of glaucoma, AMD, blepharoplasty visual fields, infection control and falls prevention as well as a comprehensive contact lens resource guide and an occupational optometry guide.

Private health insurers (PHI)

- We have continued to work with PHI providers to support billing ease for optometrists including the constant updating of member-only resources that clarify the differing rebate rules of competing private health insurance funds.
- We strongly pushed back against the introduction of new rules by health funds which sought to dictate to optometrists' clinical decisions which should remain at the discretion of practitioners rather than the health funds.

Our lead achievements

Workforce strategy

- Multiple member-only resources targeting flexible workplace arrangements have been released throughout the strategic period.
- We continue to advocate to ensure we avoid oversupply through the contribution of government submissions as consultations arise.
- In response to new schools of optometry, we raised our concerns to Canberra University and the University of Western Australia and, more specifically in relation to UWA, we 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.

Audits, claims and notifications

- Due to increased risk management education, and the provision of individualised HR and legal support provided by Optometry Australia and our dedicated Member Advisors providing tailored one-on-one advice, the percentage of optometrists receiving AHPRA/OBA notifications has remained stable with a small decrease towards the end of the reporting period. Likewise, the number of professional indemnity insurance (PII) claims have dropped significantly.

Sector advocacy

- We have continued to represent the optometry voice on numerous advisory bodies shaping eye health policy such as the Optometry Board of Australia's Regulatory Reference Committee, the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency's Profession Reference Group and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's Indigenous Eye Health Data Report Advisory Group. We are also active members of the advocacy groups National Regional Health Alliance, Allied Health Professional Australia and Vision 2020, to name a few.
- During the 2019 federal election campaign, our members sent over 4,000 pieces of communication about the importance of optometry to members of parliament.
- In 2019, following six years of advocacy in collaboration with the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health organisation (NACCHO), the Federal Government announced a \$2 million investment to support subsidised access to spectacles for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Optometry Australia continues to contribute submissions, as consultations arise, on the removal of optometry from the skilled migration list.
- A review and update of the entry-level competency standards for optometry graduates in Australia is currently underway. The goal is to ensure that graduates reflect contemporary and emerging practice.



Engage pillar - what we set out to achieve

Optometrists working in all modes of practice are vital in delivering better eye health outcomes for the Australian community.

Our engage aspiration

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

Our engage goals

- (1) The work that we do, and the benefits that we deliver, will be highly valued by optometrists as measured by increased membership engagement and growth in membership numbers, particularly amongst younger cohorts.
- (2) We will be engaging with, and be working with both independent and corporate optometry to consider and deliver collaborative strategies and projects that benefit all members and sector growth including enhanced employment opportunities, work life balance and job satisfaction.
- (3) We will be delivering quality CPD aligned to what our members want.

Our engage achievements

Membership growth

- With our increasing emphasis on strengthening our range of member benefits, including enhanced one-on-one tailored advice, membership increased. Optometry Australia now represents almost 85% of all registered optometrists, up 3% during the year. We also represent and provide support to the majority of Australia's 630 optometry students.

Member engagement and membership benefits

- We now employ seven optometrists to support our work in member advisory, clinical guidance, policy advancement, private health insurance negotiations and education development.
- Our teams respond to around 900 calls and emails from members a month. Of these, around 525 more complex communications are managed by our Optometry Advisory Help Desk service who provide individually tailored advice to a range of queries from Medicare support, PII, patient complaints, human resources, CPD, clinical management and infection control to legal issues. This service consistently receives an 80%+ approval rating from members.
- On 27 May 2019, we launched a new website as members' primary go-to-place to access quality clinical and career information. This new website enabled us to fully integrate all of the organisation's digital platforms through single-sign on. The website has continued to evolve through new content updates and through such initiatives as a Jobs Board and the COVID-19 hub. Since 1 July 2019 the website has attracted 203,760 member sessions and 1.2m member pageviews.



engage



Our engage achievements

- In responding swiftly to the COVID-19 pandemic that forced widespread business closures including 90% of optometry practices closing or scaling back opening hours in May 2020, in conjunction with the state divisions, we offered members a 50% discount off their FY20/21 membership dues and significantly ramped up communications and support. Since the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, we have maintained our program of informing members of lockdowns and restrictions that may impact their ability to practise. Our COVID-19 hub is one of the most visited sections of the website as it provides the most updated information on lockdowns, infection control, PPE, financial support and health and wellbeing advice for all optometrists, irrelevant of membership. 90% of members applauded our swift response to the COVID-19 pandemic and support provided to them by Optometry Australia.
- In collaboration with Optometry NSW/ACT we introduced:
 - Optometry Australia's Mentor Program in 2020 to support member mentors and mentees to connect with, and learn from, each other; and
 - The Resilience Box[®], a mental health and wellbeing program, which provides members with access to a range of useful tools such as collated webcasts, podcasts and more.
- A member loyalty program was introduced to recognise members celebrating major milestone membership anniversaries.
- To investigate optometric advancements in optometric clinical and patient management and/or eye health and disease diagnosis, in early 2020 we introduced the Looking Outward on Optometric Knowledge (LOOK) scholarship program earmarked to support international research.
- All patient brochures were reviewed and recreated under the *Good vision for life* brand, and they are now fully downloadable from our website for members to use in their own practices.
- We introduced an extended range of electronic newsletters during the period including Special Announcements, Focus, Your Education, Coronavirus Update, COVID-19 Bulletin, *Optometry Connection* and Your Advantage. Member responses to these newsletters have been positive with high open rates, exceeding 46%, consistently recorded. At the same time, we shifted our focus of the news stories that we deliver via our news blog to be more around Optometry Australia initiatives, member achievements and scope of practice editorial rather than on general sector news.
- To commemorate the year 2020, and our *Make this your year of good vision for life* consumer campaign, we developed a range of resources for members to utilise to assist with campaign delivery and message consistency. This included creating self-tailored marketing materials highlighting key result areas from the Vision Index research report which we commissioned in late 2019 to better understand Australians' sentiment towards their eye health.
- We increased followers on our corporate social media platforms by 10,700 over the three-year period. With continuous, informative and timely posts, we now have 21,300 highly engaged followers across our corporate Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.
- To profile optometry, optometrists and community eye health and the work that Optometry Australia does to facilitate this, optometry advancement and membership support, we delivered 1,400 pieces of editorial in national consumer and in-sector media channels during the period under review.

Member engagement – younger cohorts

- We are continuing to build strong relationships with younger members through the Early Career Optometrists (ECOs) networks, and with students via optometry schools and the Optometry Student Society Australia. In working with these groups, we now routinely bring young leaders together via ECO Think Tanks and the annual Student Leadership Program, and offer our support to the annual National Optometry Student Conference. And through Your Launching Pad, which we produce in conjunction with Optometry NSW/ACT and Optometry Vic/SA, we provide advice to members who are commencing their career as a working optometrist.
- Our Mentor Program, introduced in 2020, is also designed to connect younger members with mentors who can provide career guidance.
- We, along with the state divisions, support those members who are entering the workforce with advice on contract negotiations and navigating human resources matters.

Our engage achievements

Member CPD

- 2019 saw us launch the Optometry Australia Institute of Excellence, an online portal where members can access a range of quality online education that they can do anywhere, anytime. With all education quality assured, members can access a growing catalogue of CPD and have their CPD hours automatically uploaded against their profile for courses undertaken. The Institute of Excellence also supports the sector's most comprehensive nationwide calendar of quality assured events and CPD courses searchable by date, location, topic, cost and provider.
- With a strategic goal to deliver quality CPD aligned to what our members want, from 2018 we commenced rolling out a regular program of accredited webcasts, now 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.
- 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 on developing the resources members now need to transition to this new way of learning. This includes the launch of an online Learning Plan so that members can nominate courses they wish to undertake and then, once completed, create a reflection.
- To ensure members are accessing the best education possible, we introduced Optometry Australia's new CPD Quality Assurance Program in 2020. This means that only those courses that have passed our rigid quality assurance assessment are now promoted on the Institute of Excellence, giving members peace-of-mind that the education content or course that they participate in, satisfies the Optometry Board of Australia's time-based CPD requirements.
- Originally slated for December 2020, we brought *Optometry Virtually Connected* 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 inaugural event attracted 2,140 member and New Zealand registrations and the 2021 event, held from 18-20 June, 2,480 registrations from 15 different countries. The 2021 conference was held in conjunction with the Asia Pacific Council of Optometry and the New Zealand Association of Optometrists and the Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board of New Zealand joined us for the second year.
- In December 2020 we launched *Optometry Connection* as our new flagship optometric education publication replacing *Pharma* and *Equipment*. *Optometry Connection* was introduced to align with the change from points to time-based CPD. It provides more rounded educational content incorporating a wide range of topics on eye health advancements and research than its predecessor publications. All issues carry additional assessment to add to members' CPD.
- Likewise, we have introduced quality assured education to *Clinical & Experimental Optometry*, in a move that has been well received by members as indicated via the completion of CPD modules. During the period, CXO continued to improve its standing amongst global ophthalmology journals and in results announced in July 2021, the journal had achieved an impact factor of 2.741, a massive 43% increase over the 2019 impact factor, 1.918. This improvement has enabled CXO to increase its global ranking to 30 (from 34) out of 62 ophthalmology journals with JCI impact factors.

Promote pillar - what we set out to achieve

We are an active force for promoting and delivering better eye health outcomes for the whole community.

Our promote aspiration

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

Our promote goals

- (1) We will deliver initiatives that build a comprehensive understanding of the role of optometrists amongst the health sector and broad community as measured by:
 - (a) The delivery of annual education opportunities amongst relevant health disciplines, resulting in increased referrals from such sectors as general practitioners and pharmacists;
 - (b) Our collaboration with RANZCO;
 - (c) The number of optometry appointments being generated annually by the *Good vision for life* campaign; and
- (2) Optometry being embedded within relevant referral pathways and guides across primary and state health networks.

Our promote achievements

Relevant health disciplines and aligned eye health organisations

- We continue to forge closer relationships with RANZCO with ophthalmologists often participating in our educational webcast program, and in collaborating in a range of initiatives.
- We have continued to promote optometry and the role of optometrists amongst Australia's 30,000 pharmacists, as well as pharmacy assistants, throughout the period under review. Our goal has been to make them more aware of eye symptoms which require referral to an optometrist and particularly the top five symptoms that a pharmacist might be presented and which would be best referred to an optometrist for specific diagnosis.

Consumer eye health promotions

- Our *Good vision for life* consumer eye health campaign, which a combined 21.7m Australian cite being aware of since its launch in September 2016, has continued to gain excellent traction amongst Australians aged 18+ and importantly, it is changing consumer behaviour. Through tactics such as digital, radio and television advertising, influencer campaigns, social media and media relations, we have potentially motivated 9.7m optometry appointments, and 7.57m Australians aged 18+, to be more aware of their eye health. Likewise, in FY2020/2021:
 - 10.1m Australians aged 18+, cited that they have booked an appointment with an optometrist in the last 12 months, up 850,000 from FY2016/2017;
 - 3.28m Australians aged 18+ believe that they should see an optometrist for excessive watering, redness, pain or discharge, up 317,500 from FY2016/2017;



- 6.34m Australians aged 18+ believe that they should see an optometrist for loss of vision, sensitivity to light, blurriness or double vision, up 991,000 from FY2016/2017; and
- 9.56m Australians aged 18+ believe they should see an optometrist annually, up 850,000 from FY2016/2017.
- Contributing to the strong result of the campaign in FY2020/2021 was a concentrated effort to take advantage of the year 2020 when we launched, 2020: the year of good vision for life, a concept supported by the Federal Government who awarded Optometry Australia a grant exceeding \$400,000 to contribute to the campaign roll-out. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and backing of the government, we pivoted the campaign to Make this your year good vision for life, delivering extensive messaging within Australian print, broadcast and online media, GP practices and digital channels.
- In late 2019 we commissioned a consumer survey to determine Australians' sentiment towards their eye health and in early 2020 launched the Vision Index to media to profile these results. Through this research we delivered a record 545 pieces of quality editorial within consumer media channels in FY2020/2021, up 47% over the year before.

Booking widgets

- We introduced booking widgets to our *Find an optometrist* search function through partnerships with My Health 1st and Luxottica enabling patients to book directly with member practices utilising these booking services. Likewise, we launched member profiles enabling members to provide more details on themselves and their special interests to better inform patient choice.

Media profiling

- During the three-year period under review, we delivered 1,110 pieces of editorial within television, radio, online and print media channels. This editorial has contributed significantly to consumer awareness of eye health with kid's vision the #1 topic covered.

Direct engagement

- Our followers on our consumer-facing Facebook page have grown by 9% during the period from 4,200 to over 6,150. These followers also include members who regularly share our content on their own Facebook pages. In 2020 we introduced an Instagram page to further engage with consumers.
- We deliver regular eye health information and news to over 3,000+ consumers who have subscribed to our electronic newsletter.

Collaborative eye health consumer promotions

- Annually we support Diabetes Australia, Australian Macular Disease Foundation and Glaucoma Australia to promote their specific consumer campaigns, as well as collaborating with Vision 2020 to promote World Sight Day initiatives. We do this by either providing promotional materials to our members to utilise in their own practices or via our own consumer-facing channels.

Referral pathways

Referral pathway programs to guide across primary health networks, state health and hospitals were introduced in collaboration with our divisions in Queensland and Victoria and in NSW in relation to cataract management. Our next step is to advocate for the broad uptake of these programs.

promote

Enduring organisation pillar - what we set out to achieve

Our independent and influential organisation makes a real difference in strengthening, supporting and promoting the profession.

Our enduring organisation aspiration

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.

Our enduring organisation goal

- (1) Optometry Australia, in collaboration with the state divisions, will ensure that member fees directly benefit members through the range of services delivered and the advancement of the optometry sector. This will be measured by rigorous financial management, strong governance processes, information sharing, on-going feedback, cross-federated duplication reduction, resource efficiencies and staff satisfaction.

Our enduring organisation achievements

Prudent financial management

- As highlighted within this three-year summary report, significant investment has been made into leading the evolution of optometry, expanding our member services and promoting optometry.
- We were able to access reserves to work with the state divisions to support FY2020/2021 membership fees being discounted by 50% in response to COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns.
- Securing a Federal Government grant to support the rollout of the *Make this your year of good vision for life* campaign, enabled us to divert funds back into supporting direct member services.
- We saved significant costs with the appointment of a new publishing house for *Clinical & Experimental Optometry* and from the 2019 decision to move editorial board meetings to a virtual format.
- The replacement of *Pharma* and *Equipment* with *Optometry Connection* in December 2020, has provided the platform to improve advertising and sponsorship revenues as well as reduce printing and distribution costs.
- The introduction of *Optometry Virtually Connected* is providing us with a new platform to extend revenue sources to a trade hall environment and the collection of delegate fees from non-members.
- The introduction of a stand-alone Jobs Board in 2019 supports our revenue generating goals through employment listings.
- Following an extensive review of revenue forecasts, demand and competition, we decided to close the Advantage Program in early 2021 and the Online Bookstore in 2018.

endure

Cross federation leadership

- We have a strong cross-organisation leadership program that sees board presidents meet to discuss strategy development and progress and resource efficiencies. For instance:
 - the national president and division presidents meet on a need's basis;
 - to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, a Crisis Leadership Group that involved the national board representatives, state presidents and executives, the Chair of the Optometry Board of Australia, the Optometrists and Dispensing Optician Board of New Zealand and the New Zealand Optometrists Association, met regularly 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 developed the organisation's FY2021-2024 strategic plan; and
 - The national and divisional CEOs meet at least bi-annually to discuss operational synergies.

Resource efficiencies

- We regularly collaborate with state divisions through cross-federation working groups such as the development of referral pathway programs; delivering *Optometry Virtually Connected*; delivery of the new website; on-going management and evolution of the membership database; review of member categories; and communicating with our student, immediate and new graduates as well as Early Career Optometrists.

Staff satisfaction

- Each year we conduct a staff engagement survey and pleasingly, our annual results have remained strong and well ahead of industry benchmarks. As a result, staff turnover is relatively low albeit for readjustments due to necessary restructures to better align our skills with strategic plan imperatives.

Reconciliation action

- Our Reconciliation Action Plan – Innovative RAP – was submitted to Reconciliation Australia in August 2020. This plan aligns with the three core pillars of relationships, respect and opportunities, and 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.

100-year milestone

- In December 2018 we celebrated 100 years of being the peak professional body for optometrists in Australia. We used the opportunity to hold an event at Parliament House in Canberra attended by the national board, divisional presidents, almost all living past national presidents as well as key stakeholders. We also undertook a series of advocacy and lobbying meetings with a broad range of parliamentarians.

International awards

- In 2020 Optometry Australia was named the Asia Pacific Professional Association of the Year, presented by digital marketing agency, GlueUp.
- In 2019 we received two prestigious Asia Pacific Stevie Awards for the use of innovative video in our member communications.

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Social media platforms

Facebook members: facebook.com/OptometryAustralia/

Facebook consumers: facebook.com/goodvisionforlife

Twitter: twitter.com/OptometryAus or [@OptometryAus](https://twitter.com/OptometryAus)

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

Instagram: [@goodvisionforlife](https://instagram.com/goodvisionforlife)

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

Optometry Australia ABN: 17 004 622 431

