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# OPTOMETRISTS REGISTRATION BOARD OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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## National Registration & Accreditation Scheme for the Health Professions

### Consultation Paper on Proposed Registration Arrangements

#### Submission by the Optometrists Registration Board of WA (ORBWA)

##### **Proposal 4.1.1**

The Optometrists Registration Board of Western Australia (“ORBWA”) supports the making of enquiries regarding registration on line but has concerns regarding authentication of documentation and identification of applicants in an on-line application process. Fail proof procedures would need to be developed to enable direct verification of the information detailed below in 4.2.

ORBWA supports the availability of on-line re-registration with payment by BPay or other electronic transfer. There needs to be a means for making legal declarations incorporated into this process to cover issues such as competency, fitness to practice, convictions, PI insurance etc.

##### **Proposal 4.2.1**

ORBWA supports the information required in 4.2.1 for initial application for registration. The Board would suggest that evidence of identification should be included as a requirement under 4.2.1.

The Board would also suggest the words “or prior” be included in (c).

At present many documents are required to be originals or certified copies. Will that still be a requirement?

##### **Proposal 4.3.1**

ORBWA supports Option 3. ORBWA considers that criminal history checks are important on initial registration as Optometrists are often in close relationships with vulnerable members of the public. It is preferable to obtain a declaration from the practitioner every year rather than obtaining criminal history checks every year.

##### **Proposal 5.2**

It is noted that the IGA proposes that the Ministerial Council will assign accreditation functions to existing accreditation bodies. All State and Territory Registration Boards have been utilising the services of the Optometry Council of Australia and New Zealand (“OCANZ”) to undertake this accreditation task. In addition to accrediting courses it also assists the boards in assessing individual’s qualifications and conducting examinations for foreign trained practitioners and the Board will register practitioners on the basis of successful completion of that examination. ORBWA considers that this arrangement provides transparency to the process of assessing individual applicant’s qualifications and believes that whilst the Board has ultimate responsibility for registering purposes, the legislation should provide for the Board to seek independent advice before making a decision on an individual’s qualification.

##### **Proposal 5.3**

ORBWA supports the proposal that the national board has the power to prescribe the necessary qualifications, periods of internships and examinations required for registration.

### **Proposal 6.2.1**

ORBWA supports the proposed structure for local committees responsible for registration. Such committees should be paid sitting fees and allowances, but ORBWA questions whether sitting fees should be set by Ministerial Council. Sitting fees should be set by the National Board within the budget process.

The Board would require that the Chairperson be a registered optometrist given that the total number of registrants can be no more than two thirds.

The Board would also request that the number of committee members which forms a quorum should be included in the legislation.

### **Proposal 6.2.2**

ORBWA supports the power of the Board to be able to delegate, in writing, the registration powers with regard to routine registrations to a member of a board or committee or an employee or contractor to the national agency. This is important to allow timely processing of applications.

### **Proposal 6.4.2**

ORBWA strongly supports the Board having powers to refuse an applicant's fraudulent application and refer the matter to the police.

### **Proposal 6.6.1**

ORBWA supports initial appeal to the National Board and then, as a last resort, appeal to a Tribunal. However this would need to be carefully handled as it might provide multiple avenues of review for an individual matter.

### **Proposal 7.1**

At present, under the current Optometrists Act 2005 Provisional Registration is only for those situations where an applicant has not provided the Board with all requisite evidence, however, the Board is aware this is likely to occur. This is normally the case with new graduates, whose degree has not been conferred, but will be.

Conditional registration currently covers applicants who seek registration for the purposes of teaching or lecturing.

### **Proposal 7.2**

ORBWA supports a "specific registration" for the registration of interns who are required to practise under a supervision plan.

### **Proposal 7.3.1**

ORBWA supports the option for Boards to adopt a non practising category of registration if they wish.

### **Proposal 7.3.2**

ORBWA strongly considers that such registrants should not practise at all.

### **Proposal 7.4.1**

ORBWA supports Option 2 but only for students undertaking practical training where they are interacting with members of the public.

### **Proposal 8.1.1**

ORBWA supports the protection of the title Optometrist, Optician and the catchall provision. It is important that the public is protected from individuals who use terminology which implies that they have the skills of a registered Optometrist.

## **Proposal 8.2**

There are some concerns over the exemption for assistants working under supervision. Unless the assistant has adequate training in the tasks they are required of them and all matters of privacy, confidentiality, recordkeeping and communication, emergency procedures etc they should not be undertaking certain aspects of clinical practice.

### **Proposal 8.4.1**

ORBWA supports the definition of optical appliance being framed broadly to include all contact lenses (whether for therapeutic or cosmetic purposes).

### **Proposal 8.4.2**

The ORBWA disagrees with proposal 8.4.2.

The IGA presently provides for National Registration for those health professions who are regulated in every State and Territory. It further provides for part regulated or unregulated health professionals, such as orthoptists, to go through due process to become part of the National Registration process.

To enable one health profession, such as orthoptists, an opportunity to avoid going through this process could lead to an unregulated profession creating accountability problems if public safety issues arose from the provision of a regulated service.

Additionally, a prescription for spectacles should not be written until a diagnosis of the condition leading to the loss of vision has been made. Loss of vision can be caused by simple refractive error or by diseases that can lead to blindness or, in the most extreme cases, death.

Orthoptists cannot diagnose disease and so should not be permitted to prescribe spectacles and other optical appliances until the dangerous conditions have been eliminated as causes of the vision loss.

An example of the dangers of allowing prescription of spectacles without full eye examination is diabetic retinopathy which can cause short-sightedness. One could treat the short-sightedness with spectacles but the retinopathy would remain and get worse. lenses work before you can write a prescription.

**Defacto or pseudo-registration should not be extended beyond professions recommended by AHMAC as being necessary for public protection.**

### **Proposal 9.2.1**

ORBWA supports proposal 9.2.1 with the current accreditation body the Optometry Council of Australia and New Zealand (OCANZ) setting the competency standards.

### **Proposal 9.4.3**

ORBWA supports proposal 9.4.3 but would suggest the word “medical” in (b) be changed to “professional”

### **Proposal 10.1.3**

ORBWA supports the use of specialist titles and endorsements provided they are only used by Registered Optometrists who have attained the speciality from additional training at a level set by the National Board.

### **Proposal 10.2.1**

Prescribing rights exist in every State & Territory (other than WA) for the use of certain drugs. These prescribing rights will need to be prescribed in WA before National Registration comes into force.

### **Proposal 10.3.1**

ORBWA supports proposal 10.3.1. This would allow highly specialised procedures and techniques to be regulated to ensure that only those with appropriate training are endorsed. ORBWA supports the use of endorsement to general registration to cover other areas of practice.

### **Proposal 11.1.1**

ORBWA considers this to be an administrative nightmare. History would show that where staggered renewal dates have existed it has substantially increased the workload for Board staff. In addition registrants have got used to an annual renewal date (June 30) and can plan and organise for payment of renewals in those circumstances where they may be away at renewal date. It is unlikely that they will remember the anniversary date of their registration.

### **Proposal 11.2.4**

ORBWA supports the imposition of a penalty for non notification of change of address.

### **Proposal 11.2.5**

ORBWA supports the requirement for a primary practice address.

### **Proposal 11.3.1**

ORBWA would prefer to see an easy process for restoration to the register and a grace period of one month.

### **Proposal 11.4.1**

ORBWA supports the first proposal with a period of five years

## **ATTACHMENT 5: DEFINITIONS AND PRACTICE RESTRICTIONS FOR OPTOMETRY BY JURISDICTION**

ORBWA believes the legislation should include the following definition of optometry:

- (a) the employment of methods for the measurement of the powers of vision
- (b) the prescribing of optical appliances to correct, remedy or relieve defects of vision
- (c) the adaptation of lenses and prisms for the aid of the powers of vision;
- (d) the prescribing and fitting of contact lenses; and
- (e) the diagnosis and management of ocular manifestations of pathological conditions.