

Optometrist



Optometrists are registered health professionals concerned with the health of the eyes and related structures. They are trained to prescribe spectacles and contact lenses to improve vision, and to assess, diagnose, manage and treat various eye conditions and diseases. All practising optometrists in Australia must be registered with the Optometry Board of Australia (OBA).

Services

Optometrists provide a broad range of primary eye care services, including:

- refractive testing and comprehensive vision checks
- prescription of glasses or contact lenses
- assessment, management and referrals of ocular conditions such as dry eye and allergy
- assessment and treatment of vision problems in children
- co-management, primary care monitoring and treatment of patients with ongoing eye conditions, such as those caused by diabetes
- testing and monitoring: visual acuity testing, slit lamp examination, visual fields testing
- assessment and reporting on fitness to drive.

Registered optometrists with correct training are able to prescribe specific topical medications for the management of ocular conditions or disease. These optometrists can work within a broader scope of practice including:

- examining patients for signs of ocular disease, including superficial infection and anterior eye disease, and where necessary, treating or referring
- treating ocular conditions such as dry eye and allergy
- managing glaucoma (often done in co-management with Ophthalmologists)
- providing after-care for cataract surgery.

Optometrists work with and refer to ophthalmologists, GPs, or low vision services as required in the community.

Many optometrists do additional training and have special expertise in areas including:

- Paediatric optometry
- Vision therapy in children
- Contact lenses
- Colour vision
- Occupational vision testing
- Rehabilitation for vision problems.

Credentials

In Australia, all optometrists are required to be government registered practitioners under the national registration scheme APHRA. As such they are required to comply with all the codes and guidelines associated with such registration. These include: adherence to practice requirements; possession of appropriate professional indemnity insurance; meeting specified continuing professional development requirements; maintaining good character; and regular cardiopulmonary resuscitation training.

Top Tips for Engaging with Optometrists

Increased networking and interdisciplinary education opportunities

These would support and strengthen networks and collaboration between optometrists and other relevant primary care providers (optometrists primarily work with GPs and pharmacists at a primary care level) and encourage locally-relevant referral pathways relevant to primary eye care to be established and adhered to.

Further information

Peak Body – Optometrists Association Australia

www.optometrists.asn.au