



# **ANNUAL REPORT 2012-13**

## **OPTOMETRISTS ASSOCIATION AUSTRALIA • VICTORIA**



**The Association has two key roles: supporting our members and advocating for the profession. The best way to do this is by working together with national office and other state Divisions.**

## FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO

We are delighted to present this Annual Report outlining some of our key activities over the financial year from July 2012 to June 2013. It has been another busy year for the Association with our primary focus on supporting our members across the state in a diverse range of work settings. For the first time in our long history we have seen a challenge to membership of our organisation. Whilst this raised some concerns it also provided an opportunity to remind our members of the wide ranging work the Association undertakes on behalf of our members.

We have had the chance to meet face-to-face and online with many members at information, CPD and other activities. We are committed to supporting all our members, and the services and policy development undertaken by the Association over the year reflects this commitment.

We have worked with government, other professions and strategic partners to advocate for better eye care throughout Victoria. We also continue to work closely and cooperatively with our industry partners and now the two universities training our future members.

SRC continues to be the largest optometry conference in Australia. We were delighted to welcome around 1,000 delegates this year from Australia and beyond. According to delegate feedback both the education program and the trade expo were a great success.

After almost four years, Melissa Downing has stepped down as President. We warmly thank her for her excellent and dedicated efforts leading the Association and we are pleased that she remains on the Board to share her experience and knowledge.

We have a solid Board, a strong sense of strategic direction and a commitment to continuing to work enthusiastically for all our members.



**Kylie Harris**  
President

**Terri Smith**  
Chief Executive Officer

**TOP ROW** Kylie Harris, Julia Kabov, Stephen Jones, Melissa Downing, Rogan Fraser  
**BOTTOM ROW** Andrew Harris, Allison McKendrick, Genevieve Napper, Yota Yoshimitsu, Murray Smith

**The Board has an important function to ensure the good governance of the Association and also enjoys broad ranging discussion about issues affecting our members.**



# YOUR BOARD, YOUR ASSOCIATION

Your Association is managed by a Board of Directors, elected from the membership. The Board can have up to eight Directors, or nine Directors if the National President is a Director. The Board also has the capacity to include up to two Associate Directors.

Melissa Downing served her fourth term as President. She was supported by Kylie Harris (Vice-President) and Stephen Jones (Treasurer).

Over the last year the Board has undertaken an annual organisational risk management exercise and also reviewed the effectiveness of its own operations through an annual board performance survey. We have developed a new strategic plan, reviewed our financial delegations and ensured the sound operations of the Association.

The Association held ten Board meetings during the financial year. Melissa

Downing and Kylie Harris attended all ten meetings, Rogan Fraser and Julia Kabov attended nine meetings, Genevieve Napper and Yota Yoshimitsu attended eight meetings while Andrew Harris, Stephen Jones and Allison McKendrick each attended seven meetings. Murray Smith attended two meetings as an Associate Director. Our 2012/2013 Board members were:

- Melissa Downing, President until July 2013
- Kylie Harris, Vice-President until July 2013
- Stephen Jones, Treasurer until August 2013
- Rogan Fraser, Director
- Andrew Harris, Director
- Julia Kabov, Director
- Dr Allison McKendrick, Director and appointed National Board Director
- Dr Genevieve Napper, Director
- Yota Yoshimitsu, Director
- Murray Smith, Associate Director from April 2013 (full Director from August 2013)

# The Association is there to protect and further the interests of both individual optometrists and the profession.

## WHY WE'RE HERE

The Board undertook a strategic planning process this year to develop a new three year strategic plan. The plan, which guides the work of the Victorian Division, helps us focus our energy very clearly on what we are here to do for members and for the profession.

### **Vision**

Victorian Optometry:  
Excellence in eye and vision care

### **Purpose**

- Empowering optometry for the community
- Supporting individual members to practice optometry to the highest standards
- Ensuring vision care is a priority in the Victorian community

### **Context**

Optometry is being delivered in an environment of increasing complexity. There is:

- a changing and expanding scope of practice,
- a competitive and challenging optical market,
- increased demand for eye care and the management of chronic eye disease as Victorians age,
- competing health needs and priorities for individual patients, and
- higher expectations from patients and regulatory agencies about standards of health care.

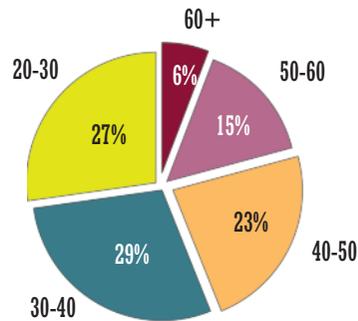
### **What we think is important**

- Effective outcomes
- Professional autonomy
- Strong leadership
- Influence
- Integrity
- Expertise

# OUR MEMBERS

Optometrists Association Victoria has 1123 members, representing approximately 93% of all registered optometrists whose principal place of practice is Victoria.

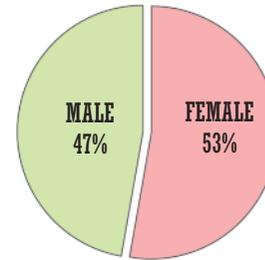
## AGE RANGE



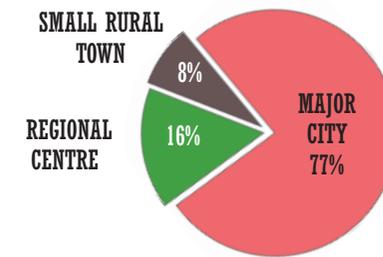
Our members range in age from 23 to 88 with 56% of our members aged under 40.

## GENDER

Bit by bit our female members are outnumbering males! This reflects a trend in recent years towards significantly higher numbers of women graduating into the profession.

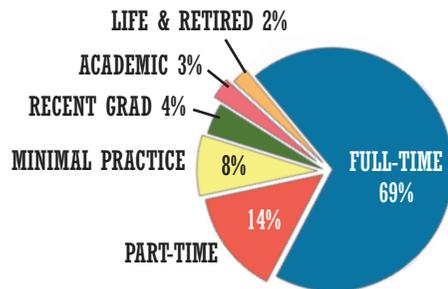


## PRIMARY LOCATION OF PRACTICE



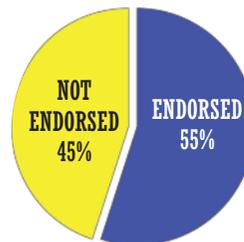
Our members work right across Victoria. The majority of our members practice in Melbourne's inner or outer suburbs.

## MEMBERSHIP BY CATEGORIES



Although the majority of our members work full-time, we have an increasing number of part-time and minimal practice members.

## THERAPEUTIC ENDORSEMENT



More than half our members have therapeutic endorsement. This grows with each year of new graduates.

## THERAPEUTICS BY AGE RANGE

Since 2005, all optometrists graduating from the University of Melbourne have completed the course eligible for therapeutic endorsement. Not surprisingly, 98% of our members under the age of 30 are therapeutically endorsed.

# MONEY MATTERS

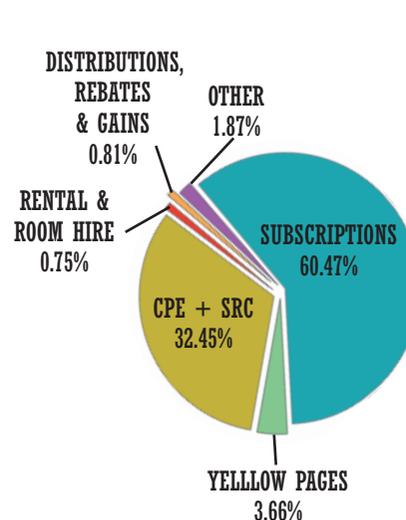
The Association reports an overall loss of \$130,516 for the 2012/2013 financial year. This is the first loss recorded for the Association in many years. It is important for members to understand that it was a planned loss. The Board decided not to increase membership fees significantly even though the Association faced a range of increased costs. The Board was satisfied that the Association's considerable reserves were large enough at that time and that we should use member funds to promote the profession. The Board committed to an additional short-term staff position (Eye Health Awareness Project Officer) to promote the crucial role of optometry to the community and to other health practitioners. We think this was a great investment!

Overall income for the Association has decreased 3.7% from \$2,571,819 in the financial year 2011/12 to \$2,473,270 this year. Expenditure has increased (5.5%) from \$2,467,127 in the financial year 2011/12 to \$2,603,786 in 2012/13.

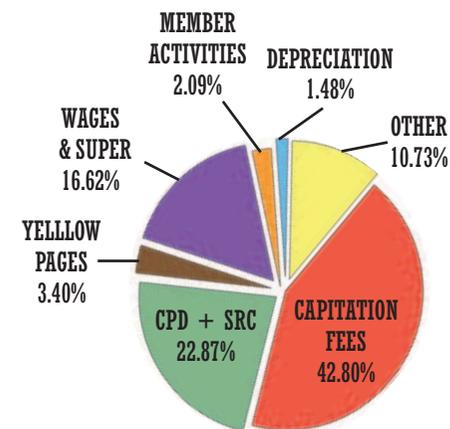
The decrease in income relates mostly to delegate and exhibitor income at SRC. The key increase in expenditure was in increased capitation fees from the national association – due largely to increased professional indemnity insurance costs.

Please note the full Financial Statements for 2012/13 are presented as a separate document.

## INCOME



## EXPENDITURE



**Rogan Fraser**  
Treasurer

**The Board remains confident that the Association's reserves are strong and we are committed to maximising member benefits.**



# GOING PUBLIC WITH THE MESSAGE

The Eye Health Awareness Project was initiated in August 2012 to raise the profile of optometry, improve community knowledge, and promote the importance of regular eye exams to the general public. Children, seniors and those in their 40s were particular groups of interest.

Victorian primary schools were targeted in the lead up to summer holidays and at the beginning of the new school year to remind parents and teachers to be vigilant about children's vision. Many schools took the time to send final copies of information published in school newsletters and approximately 1300 children's vision brochures were requested, with many schools including them in Prep transition packs. Our Back to School message was also published in six local Fairfax newspapers and our article 'Sound Sight' was featured in *Melbourne's Child Magazine*.

For the 40s plus sector, *Medibank be* magazine published information in their

member magazine and online, featuring an interview with independent optometrist Julia Kabov that illustrated the links between optometry and general health outcomes as well as key reasons to visit an optometrist.

The Victorian Government's *Seniors Online* website continues to feature our article 'Sight Saving Strategy'.

It has been fantastic to involve members in communicating our messages. Georgia Koumboulis facilitated a community presentation attended by 70 people at St Michael's on Collins Street; Vicki Nankervis spoke about eye care to Frankston City Council Aged Service Workers; and Priscilla Tricarico conducted professional development for 25 primary school nurses who conduct vision screenings in the Southern and Gippsland Region, potentially benefiting the 17,000 families with primary school aged children in that region. The time and expertise offered by members in these activities was greatly appreciated.

**Children, seniors and those in their 40s were targeted through education activities and publications aimed at raising the community's awareness of optometry services.**



## OPERATION GP

This new project was launched to find ways to strengthen professional understanding and relationships between GPs and optometrists as well as other health professionals.

Some of that work has involved linking in with Medicare Locals and meeting with key figures to gather information about the three universities offering medical qualifications. We have been able to collaborate with the Austin Clinical School (affiliated with the University of Melbourne) to create a pilot program providing clinical placements in optometry practices for medical students. This will roll out in September and October 2013.

We provided information directly to GPs and Practice Nurses via exhibiting at the Melbourne General Practitioner Conference and Exhibition in November 2012. Member Ken Thomas delivered a 'Meet the Expert' session.

We also exhibited at the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) – Victoria's Primary Health Care Weekend, where information was shared with pharmacists and pharmacy students. The PSA's journal *Australian Pharmacist* has published two articles; one introducing optometry and eye health to pharmacists and another aimed at pharmacy assistants and their important role in engaging the community in eye health messages.

An important aspect of the project has been to encourage members to establish their own local links with GPs. To assist members, we asked optometrists to let us know about their experiences and stories about working with GPs and used them in *Scope* and a hints-and-tips resource. We created an electronic GP referral form for members to personalise and provide to their local GPs. Resources from Operation GP are available on our website.



**An important aspect of Operation GP has been to encourage members to establish their own local links with GPs: there's more on our website.**

**Throughout 2012-13, we put together a range of events and educational opportunities for our members to come together, log on, learn, and discuss.**



# LISTEN, LEARN (AND SOME FUN, TOO)

We reckon access to good, clear and purposeful information is the best way to support high standards of practice and professional satisfaction. Throughout 2012-13, we put together a range of events and education opportunities for our members to come together, log on, learn, and discuss.

The audience for our webinars continued to grow, with members logging on to learn about tips for co-managing patients with ophthalmologists, and for managing low vision patients in practice. Our Zoo Breakfast proved popular once more, with over 100 members joining us for a start-of-summer social breakfast, and a CPD session covering the latest on UV and the eyes, and myopia progression and the great outdoors.

For our students and young members, we provided our annual Getting Registered session, met more than 70 students at our Careers Expo, and held an informal dinner to find out how our new graduates were faring in their first months of practice.

In conjunction with the Australian Dental Association Victorian Branch, we once again offered four of our outstanding young optometrists and potential future leaders the opportunity to participate in a course aimed at developing their skills, through the 2012 Health Sector Leadership Program.

A wide range of appreciative members continues to take advantage of our convenient CPR training sessions.

Through *Scope*, now available online in FlipBook or PDF formats, and delivered to members six times a year, we continue to support member knowledge, promote new developments, help members navigate and understand legislation, guidelines or clinical developments that might affect their practice, and share information (and photos) about the activities of the Division and opportunities for its members.





# ADVOCATES FOR OPTOMETRY

Together with our national Association, we have been working hard to make sure that optometrists are seen as a visible and important part of the Australian health workforce. During 2012-13, Victorian members and office staff contributed to a national Policy and Advocacy Working Group to provide direction and suggestions to inform the Association's advocacy on issues including the optometry MBS and PBS, therapeutics, and clinical placements. Victorian members also contributed enthusiastically to a national campaign to let Federal members of Parliament know why the Association believes the cap on Medicare charging is increasingly outdated, irrelevant and counter-productive health policy. In all, 23 Victorian members met directly with local MPs to explain the issues raised by the fee cap, and many more contributed to the campaign by writing to local MPs, the Federal Health Minister, or the Shadow Health spokesperson.

In Victoria, we worked locally with organisations including VicRoads (to

improve clarity around testing for driving vision), with Medicare Locals and GP groups, and with the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital, which has now developed guidelines for RVEEH admissions which encourage prior referral to, and management by, optometrists, where clinically appropriate.

We continued to support a very wide range of individual members on issues including national registration and the registration audit process. OAA-Vic also ensures we have input into national policy, advocacy and materials for members, contributing to the development of many submissions covering areas including: scheduled medicines and glaucoma prescribing; social media; AHPRA guidelines; and various clinical guidelines for optometrists.

OAA-Vic also continues to meet regularly with organisations representing the interests of other registered health practitioners in Victoria, including GPs, dentists, pharmacists, and physiotherapists.

**Victorian members lent enthusiastic support to the national campaign to remove the Medicare fee cap, with 23 members meeting with local MPs and many more writing letters to the Minister, and Shadow Minister, for Health.**



# FROM PODIUM TO PRACTICE

## Plenty to take away from SRC 2013

SRC 2013 was one of the smoothest and most enjoyable in recent time. Both delegates and exhibitors were very happy, and happy to tell us they were happy! The exceptional education program was backed up with a Trade Expo that looked great and was buzzing at every break.

Delegates rated this year's keynote presenters Dr Blair Lonsberry and Dr Jim Thimons very, very highly. Summing up their popularity (of both style and content) is this comment from an attendee: *Very impressed by the keynote speakers this year! Dr Thimons is clearly very knowledgeable and was able to present very comprehensive sessions in an easily palatable manner. Thoroughly enjoyed the interactive nature of Dr Lonsberry's presentations and his quirky sense of humour.*

This year, we introduced some new events and specialised topics to our strong clinical program. The Public Health Symposium, with guest speakers Prof.

Darryl Guest and Prof. Rob Moodie highlighted the important role optometrists can play in delivering equitable and accessible health outcomes right across the community. We were delighted to welcome 14 country practitioners from Victoria, NSW and Tasmania to the Rural Optometry Dinner. And on Monday afternoon, Tasmanian technerd and digital radio star Andrew Hogan gave the lowdown on getting the best and the most out of Facebook and social media as a tool to build your practice.

Relationships with a variety of suppliers really bore fruit for us this year; everyone from the graphic designer right down to the courier who delivered our equipment to the venue were prepared to listen and be especially flexible and accommodating to our needs. This stands us in good stead as we move into the planning of SRC 2014. This was the last winter SRC; from 2014 we move to late summer dates.

**SRC 2013 offered a high quality education program in a relaxed, friendly environment. The Trade Expo, new events and broadened scope of topics rounded out the event.**



## FROM THE HEART

Call it good corporate citizenship, or just good common sense: the Association supports a range of great causes in different ways. We have supported Optometry Giving Sight throughout the year through regular promotion of their messages to our members, free booth space at SRC, the SRC Dinner raffle, the golf day and an OGS donation option with our membership renewals.

Each year we offer a travel bursary to assist an optometrist from a resource-poor overseas setting to come to SRC. This year, the bursary supported Carlos Sánchez-Seco Villalba, the Optometry Course Coordinator at the Universidade Lúrio – Mozambique Eyecare Project. He recently sent us this message of thanks: “On my own behalf and on behalf of my organisation, I would like to thank you for the opportunity that I have enjoyed being able to attend the SRC of

*Optometry in Melbourne. It was very useful and satisfying on a personal level and I think that it will have a positive impact in my daily work at the University of Lurio in Nampula (Mozambique).”*

We have also made our seminar and Board rooms available to AMAZE (Autism Victoria) for a range of activities that support people affected by Autism Spectrum Disorders. Its CEO, Murray Dawson-Smith, said, “Over the past 12 months we have been delighted to be able to access the meeting area of the OAA-Vic. We have been able to provide a significant number of training and learning opportunities to both parents and professionals supporting individuals with an Autism Spectrum Disorder . . . the fact that the meeting room is so close to our own office has been a bonus. I look forward to continuing the association well into the future.”

**It doesn't take a lot of effort to support a good cause  
- a small contribution can make a big difference.**

**FROM LEFT Johanna Hersey, Helen Papadimitriou, Jenny Hall, Kirsty Machon, Terri Smith, Kathy Roberts, Laura Grattidge**



The OAA-Vic staff love working for members. We are here to help our members with all kinds of activities or queries, and we do so on a regular basis, whether that is by taking your phone calls or email, providing information sessions, CPR training, webinars or social activities. We hope you read our bimonthly publication, *Scope*, our fortnightly news updates and alerts in the national e-bulletin and email messages we may send to you from time to time about important matters. We enjoy answering your questions – often they are easy, but sometimes we have to do some research. That keeps us learning and thinking too. We really hope we have met your needs throughout the year. Please let us know if there is something else we can do for you.

**We are fortunate to have a strong staff team. They are here to help and support members to get on with the important business of optometry.**

Our staff are:

- Terri Smith, CEO
- Laura Grattidge, Operations Manager
- Kirsty Machon, Policy and Member Services Manager
- Helen Papadimitriou, SRC Coordinator
- Jenny Hall, Member Data Base and Accounts Officer
- Johanna Hersey, Member Liaison Officer
- Kathy Roberts, Eye Health Awareness Project Officer  
(Short-term position until December 2013)

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DESIGN STEVIE BEE DESIGN

### **FOR THE INDIVIDUAL AND FOR THE PROFESSION**

**The Association has a role to protect and further the interests of both individual optometrists and the profession.**

For individual members, we are here to:

- support members to practice in a way that allows them to use their skills and training, so that their professional life is personally rewarding
- make sure our members have the clinical, practical and professional support and information they need to practice optometry effectively and to a high standard.

For the profession, we are here to:

- ensure optometry and eye care are on the agenda of those setting and directing health policies and providing services in Victoria
- make sure GPs, specialists and other health professionals are aware of what optometrists do and why it makes clinical and economic sense to provide integrated care
- raise awareness within the Victorian community about the role optometrists play in eye care, and the services they can provide
- ensure measures are in place to keep optometry a viable and attractive profession into the future.