



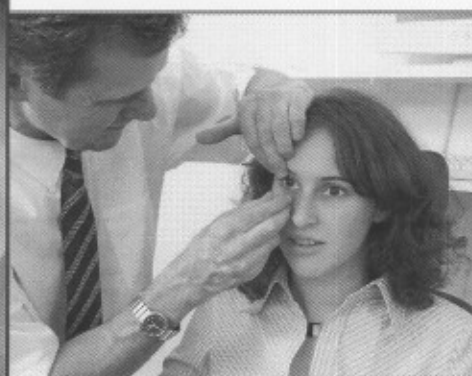
Memorandum of Understanding

between

Australian General Practice Network

and

Optometrists Association Australia



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Background

The continuing good health of all Australians depends on good primary health care. A fundamental part of good health is vision.

In November 2005 the Australian Government, State and Territory Health Ministers endorsed at the Australian Health Ministers' Conference a *National Framework for Action to Promote Eye Health and Prevent Avoidable Blindness and Vision Loss*.

The general practitioner and the optometrist can work together as two important providers in the wider primary health care team, with the aim of ensuring the best possible patient eye health and prevention of avoidable blindness.

GPs and optometrists are the most often consulted professions when Australians seek help with their eye health. Together, local general practices and optometrists, deliver daily eye care and health advice to more than 4 million Australians each year.

Respectively the Australian General Practice Network and the Optometrists Association Australia represent national networks of 119 local divisions of general practice which support more than 21, 426 general practitioners¹ and over 3,500 optometrists.

Good primary health care relies on many different people, businesses, institutions and systems working together with the health consumer at the centre of their care.

The Australian General Practice Network and the Optometrists Association Australia have agreed this MOU to help strengthen collaboration between relevant organisations and between general practice and optometry so that Australians receive the best possible primary eye care.

¹ AGPN 2004-05 Annual Survey of Divisions as reported by Primary Health Care Research & Information Services – January 2006

Primary Health Care Partnership

Australian General Practice Network

- recognises the Optometrists Association Australia as the national peak organisation representing Australian optometry
- recognises the role of optometry in providing primary eye health care and advice to Australians
- supports the role of optometrists in the provision of quality primary eye care, including prescribing optical appliances and medications approved for optometric practice.

Optometrists Association Australia

- recognises Australian General Practice Network as the national peak organisation coordinating development and strategic direction of the divisions network
- recognises the role of local divisions of general practice and their state-based organisations to provide support to general practices, their doctors and staff
- supports development of the role of divisions of general practice as leaders in quality primary health care service provision, coordination and linkage.

AUSTRALIAN GENERAL PRACTICE NETWORK and OPTOMETRISTS ASSOCIATION AUSTRALIA

- recognise that primary health care is enhanced when health professionals adopt a multi-disciplinary and team approach to care planning and delivery of health care to the patient
- reconfirms that the General Practitioner / Optometrist relationship as a vital component in the primary health care team approach. The partnership seeks to focus on improving communication between a General Practitioner and the Optometrists to ensure the best possible primary health care management of patient's visual needs
- recognise that General Practice and Optometry are influenced by wider systems including quality use of medicine initiatives and policies
- commit to working together to improve the primary health care sector and its systems in regard to General Practice and Optometry for the benefit of all Australians

Principles

The Australian General Practice Network and the Optometrists Association Australia (the partners) affirm the following principles:

The primary health care of Australians is an important national priority:

The partners will work together to improve eye health outcomes for the whole community and to influence persons, institutions and governments for the improvement of health care systems.

General practice and the divisions network are central to the primary health care of Australians:

The partners affirm the expertise of general practitioners in the diagnosis, management and treatment of illness including the prescribing of medications and appropriate referral.

Optometry and the Optometrists Association Australia are central to the provision of primary eye health care of Australians:

The partners affirm the expertise of optometrists in the diagnosis, management and treatment of disorders of the eyes and visual system, including the prescribing of optical appliances, approved medications and appropriate referral.

The partners affirm the role of the divisions network and the Optometrists Association in assisting general practice and optometry at the local level.

Collaboration between general practice and optometry is critical to the primary eye health care of Australians:

The partners recognise consumer perceptions of general practice and optometry as two of the key providers of primary eye health care in Australia and acknowledge the need for cooperation and coordination between the two professions.

The partners will work together to improve collaboration and communication between general practice, optometry and their consumers in relation to primary eye care. Specifically they will ensure appropriate and timely referral between themselves and specialist care providers according to the needs of consumers.

Cooperation between the Australian General Practice Network and the Optometrists Association Australia will help enhance the primary care of Australians:

The partners recognise each other's roles in supporting their respective professions and will work together to improve communication, understanding and cooperation between the two professions through the Divisions Network and through national and state structures of the Optometrists Association Australia.

The Agreement

This MOU commits the Australian General Practice Network and the Optometrists Association Australia to work together for three years in the following agreed project areas which are consistent with the National Eye Health Framework and the goal to promote eye health and reduce the incidence of avoidable blindness and vision loss in Australia.

Objective One: Reducing the risk of eye disease and injury

Public awareness and preventive health: The partners will cooperate to better inform the public about ocular health and the benefits of protecting vision and avoiding vision loss.

Objective Two: Increasing early detection

Referral Procedures: The partners will develop optimal procedures for ensuring appropriate and timely referrals between general practice and optometry, and will jointly promote best-practice referrals within their professions.

Objective Three: Improving access to eye health care services

Indigenous Eye Health: The partners will examine and evolve improved methods by which the eye health needs of indigenous Australians can be better met.

Objective Four: Improving the systems and quality of care

Quality use of medicines: The partners support the National Medicines Policy including the National Strategy for the Quality Use of Medicines (QUM) and will work together to develop optimal use of medicines in the treatment of eye diseases and conditions in the primary health care setting.

The MOU will use each others respective representative structures at either a local, state and national level or as a multi tier combination to progress the agreed project areas.

Work in the specific projects will not be limited to Australian General Practice Network and the Optometrists Association Australia membership and where appropriate other medical, allied health professionals or State / Territory health officials can be invited to be involved.

The guiding principles for involvement will be firstly evidence based and secondly on maximising the benefit or outcomes to the patient in terms of eye care. Third party involvement will occur on an individual project basis following consultation and mutual agreement by the nominated Australian General Practice Network and Optometrists Association Australia project leader respectively.

Professional development

The partners affirm the value of multi-disciplinary delivery of primary health care to health outcomes and will work together to develop initiatives for the enhancement of each profession within the context of collaborative service delivery.

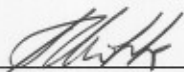
The partners further affirm the shared small business approach and commercial context within which both professions work to deliver primary health care.

Implementation

The Board of the Australian General Practice Network and the National Council of the Optometrists Association Australia or their representatives will meet together once a year to evaluate and review progress of this MOU. Executives of the Australian General Practice Network and the Optometrists Association Australia will meet not less than twice a year to review progress.

AUSTRALIAN GENERAL PRACTICE NETWORK

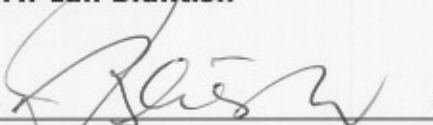
Chairperson Dr Tony Hobbs

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Date: _____ 14/02/2007

OPTOMETRISTS ASSOCIATION AUSTRALIA

President Mr Ian Bluntish

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Date: _____ 12/2/07