

**Minutes**  
**OPTOMETRY WA (Inc)**  
**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Held at 6:00pm on Wednesday 16 October 2024**

**39 Fairway Crawley and via technology**

**1.0 PRESENT**

Jeff Dowson, Kwong Yee Ho, Andrew Nguyen, Sinead Denny, Michelle Bell, Benjamin Gilbert, Stephanie Bahler, Adrian Rossiter, Gary Cerie, Robert Howie, Lisa Jansen, Elisse Higginbotham, An Tran, Shi Yue Feng, Kevin Sun, Neilsen De Souza, Han Trinh, Hui-Lin Chan, Nicholas Tran, Alan Choy, Ella Goh, Khyber Alam, Lynne Alard, OWA CEO Evan MacRae.

**APOLOGIES**

Nil

**2.0 PRESIDENT'S WELCOME**

With a quorum present, The President opened the meeting at 6:02pm and welcomed those in attendance.

**3.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The President called for any members who may have any real or potential conflicts of interest to declare so.

Stephanie Bahler declared the ongoing potential for conflict of interest to occur because of her employment with Alcon.

Andrew Nguyen and Sinead Denny have advised they sit on a UWA School of Optometry subcommittee and declare the potential for conflict to occur.

Kevin Sun is the nominated Director of OWA and sits on the Optometry Australia Board

**4.0 BUSINESS ARISING**

**4.1 Confirmation of Previous Minutes**

The minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting held on 18 October 2023 were reviewed and confirmed to be a true and correct record.

**Moved: A Nguyen**  
**Seconded: G Cerie**

## 4.2 Annual President's Report

As presented by President Stephanie Bahler

Optometry Western Australia (OWA) acknowledges the Whadjuk Nyoongar People as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters where we are and pay our respect to Elders past and present. I also acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which other members are from, and we extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples here today.

I am honoured to be presenting the annual report on the OWA progress. To begin, I'd like to introduce and welcome my fellow Board Members, Andrew Nguyen who is treasurer, Kevin Sun the appointed National Director, Pricilla Ho the ECO President, Gary Cerie who is also one of OWA's life members, and the other Directors Michelle Bell, Hui-Lin Chan, Sinead Denny, Ella Goh, and Alan Choy. Within our operations team, we have Evan MacRae, the Chief Executive Officer, and Jude Martindale, the Events and Membership Manager.

I'd like to extend a warm welcome to all of you, and our members online, at this year's AGM.

I am pleased to advise that OWA are standing in a financially strong position. We sold the West Perth office in December 2023 due to ongoing holding costs, the adoption of flexible working from home environments plus virtual streaming capabilities. WAVE was another huge success due to the collaboration with Optical Dispenser's Association, and we saw increased revenue because of high member numbers, trade partners, investments, and sponsorship opportunities.

We maintained your member fees for three years in a row for all member categories, except for Recent Graduates which we reduced for this year. I will entrust our Treasurer Andrew who will detail the annual financial report shortly.

As you may recall, OWA held a recent special general meeting in which there was a majority vote in favour of board member remuneration changes to the Rules. The annual remuneration was to be a token and recognition of the commitment of board members to the profession and to advancing the lot of fellow members. This would bring Optometry WA into line with other optometry boards, and aid in the long-term succession planning for the Association and its committees. We promised to declare the remuneration at each AGM and share reporting measures for the accountability of board members. This remuneration was calculated at an optometrists' approximate hourly rate, multiplied by the expected number of meetings, and factored into the annual budget. The Treasurer and President will be paid slightly more to factor in the additional workload required to fulfill their roles. The total value set aside was \$24,500 between the 10 of us.

Unfortunately, our submission was rejected by the relevant WA Government authority citing the fact that the meeting was held via ZOOM as not in keeping with their regulations. The department has contradicted their own model rules which incorporate use of technology, despite OWA covering meetings held by technology in our constitution. Western Australian law remain somewhat lagging other states, with technology, so we will run another SGM. I can assure you though that we can hold our AGM in this hybrid manner.

From an accountability perspective, we have created the 'Optometry Western Australia Board Member Governance and Accountability Statement', and Director engagement figures can be found in the annual report.

We as a board would like to ensure transparency to our members, so this year we have a detailed annual report with submissions from each committee. We have five committees, and I will take them as read by the members. The four pillars in our 2024-2027 strategic plan are also enclosed within the report.

Under Pillar 1: Engage optometrists, provide valued member services, we made a commitment to address the risk of 'burn out' amongst members. In the recent months, we realise that there is a much greater issue out there, with several members concerned about the 'over supply' in metro areas, and unrealistic KPI expectations in some settings. As a professional association, we work to promote the industry and profession, and unfortunately cannot get involved between a member and their employer as that is a one-on-one contractual agreement. We can, however, support with lawyers, position statements, and advice.

By maintaining high optometry registration to optometry member numbers, you give us the power to be the voice for your cause, with the right conditions. Optometry Australia have also established the Member Assistance Program to support optometrists in strengthening their mental resilience and wellbeing. We represent a range of paying members from employee to employer-type, independent, corporate, locums/contractors, academics, and everyone in between. So, we may be conflicted in who we are seen to support. However, I can assure you that I hear you, we hear you. I've been there too. We will do what we can to ensure the sustainability of our profession, and the health and well-being of individuals. To wrap up, I hope that the well-considered initiatives and improvements continue to be of benefit to you.

As a reminder, we exist to create value for our grassroots members, and to do this we will need your feedback, so my door is always open.

I'd like to thank our Board and committee members for their dedication to the Association. Thanks also to the OWA operations team, Jude, and Evan, for their diligent work and support, and for the great team that they are. A special thanks goes to the two directors stepping down today: Gary Crier, life member, and Andrew Nguyen, treasurer.

Gary graduated Optometry from UNSW in 1980. He opened a greenfields practice in Bullcreek one year later. He did his post-graduate in therapeutics, and was involved in low vision, sports vision, and rural and remote optometry work. In 2001 Gary started a project to get Optometric care out to regions and indigenous areas in all parts of the state, and he worked in Aboriginal Medical Services around the Kimberleys. It was Gary who established the Reconciliation Action Committee for OWA. He was heavily involved with ProVision in the early 2000s, and he became a Fellow for the Australian Institute of Company Directors and completed a Graduate Certificate in Business Administration. Outside of optometry, Gary was involved in the Dyslexia foundation, Learning and Attentional Deficits Society, Literacy, and the Rotary Club of Melville. He helped with the establishment of WA Bush Poets and Yarn Spinners association, coaches girls and women's soccer, and is active in tennis, golf, and art. He has raised three daughters and now will take the time off to care for his parents and spend time with his two grandsons and grand-daughter.

I don't know anyone who has a more colourful and well accomplished history like Gary, and I know that his expertise and contribution to this board and the OWA in recent

decades will be surely missed. But, Gary, you are our life member, and we would welcome your smiling face back any time.

Andrew is an early career optometrist and so this CV is undoubtedly shorter, but I know that Andrew has also accomplished a lot in his time. He graduated with a Doctor of Optometry from the University of Melbourne in 2015. He has developed a broad range of clinical experience by working in various optometric settings, including rural and metropolitan practices across Australia and ophthalmology clinics, enabling him to effectively manage patients of all ages. In 2018, Andrew joined the OWA board, becoming treasurer in 2019. What inspired him to join was his commitment to advocating for the optometry profession and to raise awareness about the importance of eye health. He is also an active committee member of ECOWA.

Andrew has decided to step down from the board to focus on his other commitments. He currently runs his own independent practice with a special interest in paediatrics and myopia control and works in the Ophthalmology Department at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital. We wish Andrew all the best in his endeavours, and every success along the way.

To our members, we thank you for your loyal support, camaraderie, and membership to OWA.

Thank you.

### **4.3 Annual Financial Report**

The 2023/2024 financial year has been another positive one for Optometry Western Australia. Despite the challenging economic conditions, we maintained stable membership fees while successfully delivering increased value to our members. Through prudent financial management and operational efficiency, Optometry Western Australia was able to close the year with a surplus, ensuring our continued financial strength and ability to support our mission.

The proportion of optometrists who are members of Optometry Western Australia remains robust, exceeding 91%. The total income from membership fees increased by 5% compared to the previous year, driven by an influx of optometrists relocating from interstate and the graduation of the first cohort from The University of Western Australia. This year's WAVE conference was a tremendous success, with a 28% increase in registration fees compared to last year. Additionally, we saw a 9.10% rise in sponsorship from industry partners. The hybrid presentation model has become a signature feature of Optometry Western Australia events, allowing delegates to attend either in person or virtually from the comfort of their homes.

Optometry Western Australia holds term deposits with interest rates ranging from 4.08% to 4.56%, featuring various maturity dates aligned with specific financial targets. These term deposits not only help hedge against inflation but also diversify our earnings, providing a stable and predictable return on investment.

Our organisational holdings as of the 30th of June 2024 rose 9.87% year over year. Overall expenses for the year were lower than budgeted, achieved through continuous consideration and management of expenditures. Optometry Western Australia remains in

a strong financial position, ensuring we can continue to provide valuable benefits to our members.

Looking ahead, our goals for the upcoming year include exploring alternative revenue streams and continuing to find innovative ways to enhance member services while ensuring fiscal responsibility. We appreciate the hard work and dedication of our board, staff, and members in achieving these results, and we look forward to another successful year.

The Auditors Report of OWA's finances was positive. Relevant snippet from the report: "In our opinion the accompanying financial report has been prepared in accordance with requirements of the Associations Incorporation Act 2015 (WA), including:

- a) Giving a true and fair view of the entity's financial position as at 30 June 2024, and of its financial performance and its cash flows for the year then ended; and
- b) Complying with Australian Accounting standards" - end quote

The Auditors Report confirmed that Optometry Western Australia is tracking financially well with strong cash reserves and that our spending is in line with the best interests of our members.

The report shows our continued dedication to running a smooth and transparent organisation. This will only continue.

## **Finance and Risk Committee**

The Optometry Western Australia risk committee is responsible for overseeing and managing the organisation's risk management framework. It is responsible for identifying, assessing, and monitoring risks that could impact the organisation's ability to achieve its objectives. The primary goals include to protect Optometry Western Australia's assets, ensure the integrity of financial reporting and promote a risk-aware culture throughout the organisation.

For the fiscal year ending 30th June 2024, Optometry Western Australia reported a 9.87% increase in total holdings. This was achieved by maintaining lower-than-budgeted expenses through careful consideration and management of expenditures. The organisation has further reinforced its financial strength and its capacity to continue supporting members effectively.

The committee reviewed key risks facing the organisation and there were two notable risks this fiscal year. One notable risk being the increase in capitation fees from Optometry Australia. While we had the option to pass this cost onto our members through higher fees, we carefully considered the current economic climate and chose to absorb the increase. This decision was made to protect our members and enhance the overall value of membership.

The second notable risk identified this year was succession planning. With board members rotating on and off, we recognised the need to ensure the recruitment and retention of high-quality candidates. To address this, the board discussed and implemented a modest honorarium for members, aimed at encouraging continued participation and attracting skilled individuals to the board.

Looking ahead, the Finance and Risk Committee remains committed to ensuring the financial health and sustainability of Optometry Western Australia. By proactively

managing risks and maintaining fiscal responsibility, we aim to enhance the value provided to our members.

#### **4.3 Key Functions of a Risk Committee:**

1. Risk Assessment: Evaluating potential risks related to operations, finance, compliance, and strategic initiatives.
2. Policy Development: Creating and updating risk management policies and procedures.
3. Monitoring and Reporting: Regularly reviewing and reporting on the organization's risk exposure and risk management activities to the board.
4. Compliance Oversight: Ensuring adherence to legal and regulatory requirements related to risk management.
5. Risk Culture Promotion: Fostering a culture of risk awareness and proactive risk management within the organization.

**Moved: Andrew Nguyen**  
**Seconded: S Denny**

#### **5.0 ELECTION OF DIRECTORS AND OFFICE BEARERS FOR 2023/24**

As per rule 21.1(c) of the Rules governing the Association, the following Directors 'retired' from office. They were:

**Andrew Nguyen, Sinead Denny, Stephnaie Bahler, Kevin Sun.**

In addition, Gary Crierie advised that he is retiring from the board at the completion of the meeting and will not be re nominating.

#### **5.1 Nominations for Board Positions for 2023/24**

The valid nominations for Board positions under rule 21.2 were:

Stephanie Bahler

Sinead Denny

Kevin Sun

Ben Gilbert

As per rule 21.3(c) there were not enough valid nominations to fill the number of vacancies for the relevant positions on the Board. The candidates nominated are deemed to be elected and further nominations are called for.

There was one nomination from the floor:

**Nominee:** Lynne Allard  
**Nominated by:** Lisa Jansen  
**Seconded by:** Khyber Alam

## 5.2 Appointment of Board Member

The President proposed that the board consider the extension of the non-Optometrist board position occupied by Alan Pui-Yan Chan as per the constitution of OWA for a further 2 years

**Moved:** A Nguyen  
**Seconded:** P Ho  
**Carried:** Unanimously

## 5.3 Directors for 2023/24

The President then declared that the Board for 2023/24 would be:

Yee (Ella) Teng Goh  
Michelle Bell  
Stephanie Bahler  
Kevin Sun  
Hui-Lin Chan  
Ben Gilbert  
Lynne Allard  
Sinead Denny

Pricilla Ho (in capacity as Chair of ECO group - as per Governance Policy one appointed Board position is reserved for the Chair of ECO)

Alan Choy Co-opted Board member for an additional 2 year term.

The President noted that the new Board would form at the end of the AGM.

As per rule 15.2(e) the President then called for nominations to occur and for voting to occur by the Board for the positions of:

### **President**

**Nominated: Stephanie Bahler**

**Moved:** Andrew Nguyen  
**Seconded:** Kevin Sun  
**Carried:** Unanimously

## Vice President

**Nominated:** There were no nominations. The position remains vacant.

**Moved**  
**Seconded**  
**Carried**

## Treasurer

**Nominated:** Alan Choy

**Moved** A Nguyen  
**Seconded** E Goh  
**Carried** Unanimously

The President then welcomed the new Board and looked forward to their contributions over the next year.

## 6.0 GENERAL BUSINESS

There were no items of General Business.

## 7.0 MEETING CLOSE

With there being no further business, the President closed the meeting at 6.29 pm.

Minutes Confirmed:



Stephanie Bahler, President

Date: 22/10/2024