

## CONSULTATION – PROPOSAL TO AMEND DISPENSING OPTICIAN SCOPE OF PRACTICE

**Released: 10 January 2020**

**Submissions Due: 21 February 2020**

### Introduction

- 1 The Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board (the Board) is charged under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (the Act) with describing the contents of the professions it regulates in terms of one or more scopes of practice.
- 2 Section 11 of the Act sets out that a scope of practice may be described in any way the appointed authority (the Board) thinks fit, including, without limitation, in any one or more of the following ways:
  - by reference to a name or form of words that is commonly understood by persons who work in the health sector;
  - by reference to an area of science or learning;
  - by reference to tasks commonly performed;
  - by reference to illnesses or conditions to be diagnosed, treated, or managed.
- 3 An authority may at any time, by notice in the *New Zealand Gazette*, amend, revoke, or replace a notice issued under section 11 of the Act, describing a scope of practice. Before doing so, however, an authority must consult on such a proposal with:
  - people the Board considers are able to represent the view of health practitioners or of classes of health practitioners registered with the Board;
  - organisations that the Board considers will be affected by the proposal; and
  - organisations whose members the Board considers will be affected by the proposal.

### Background

- 4 The scope of practice for dispensing opticians was consulted on and confirmed for the inception of the Act in 2004 and a notice published in the *New Zealand Gazette*. The only change to the scope since this time was a name change in 2018, from the 'Scope

of Practice for Optical Dispensing' to the 'Dispensing Optician Scope of Practice'. Some minor changes to the description of the scope of practice were also proposed in 2018 around the performance of auxiliary tasks (now referred to as 'delegated tasks') by dispensing opticians, but following submissions received, the Board felt that further definition was needed regarding what was meant by these tasks and the extent to which they were delegated to dispensing opticians, so these changes were not confirmed. Below is this further information and a new proposal for amendment to the description of the scope of practice.

## **Current Scope of Practice**

5 The scope of practice is currently described in the following way:

### ***Dispensing Optician Scope of Practice***

*Optical dispensing describes the practice of the interpreting and dispensing of optical prescriptions by a person with a recognised qualification. This includes the giving of advice and instruction in the dispensing of spectacle lenses, spectacle frames (including their fitting), contact lenses, and any other optical device intended for correction of a defect of sight.*

6 Over the years, the role of the dispensing optician in practice has evolved, in large part due to the evolution of the role of optometrists, with dispensing opticians taking on more and more of a support role to optometrists (and, at times, ophthalmologists) and performing various tasks delegated by optometrists or ophthalmologists in the provision of optimal vision care to patients.

7 The Board believes it is time for the description of the Dispensing Optician Scope of Practice to more accurately reflect the role that dispensing opticians are performing today. This is to ensure that health professionals and health consumers can more easily know the parameters a dispensing optician is permitted and competent to work within. It also ensures that the Board can provide guidance and standards for all aspects of dispensing optician practice. This is consistent with the principal aim of scopes of practice under the Act, which is to provide a transparent framework so that health professionals and consumers of health and disability services can easily know the parameters a health professional is competent to work within and can be assured of their competence<sup>1</sup>.

## **Proposal**

8 Following the earlier consultation, a working party of select Board members was established to more fully consider submitter feedback and further refine the proposal for change to the scope of practice. The working party wanted input from the Association of Dispensing Opticians of New Zealand in refining the scope wording, so invited the then

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<sup>1</sup> The *Health Professionals Competency Assurance Bill Discussion Paper*, published in September 2000.

Association President to participate on the working party. The working party reported their suggestions to the Board and below is a more refined proposal, including a definition of delegated tasks which the Board proposes to include in the Dispensing Optician Scope of Practice published in the *New Zealand Gazette* so that the definition is readily available and provides clarity on what is meant by the term 'delegated tasks'.

- 9 The Board proposes to **amend** the description of the Scope of Practice as follows (changes/additions highlighted in red):

*“A dispensing optician registered in the Dispensing Optician Scope of Practice has a qualification prescribed by the Board and is involved in the practice of interpreting and dispensing optical prescriptions, and performing tasks delegated by an optometrist or ophthalmologist (delegated tasks\*). Dispensing optician practice includes the giving of advice and instruction in the dispensing of spectacle lenses, spectacle frames (including their fitting), contact lenses, and any other optical device intended for correction of a defect of sight.”*

The Board also proposes to include the following additional detail/clarifying information in the notice published in the *New Zealand Gazette* -

#### **\* Delegated Tasks**

*A delegated task is an activity or procedure, instructed to, performed on, or activated for a patient in order to:*

- *Obtain clinical data*
- *Prepare for a procedure*
- *Follow a therapy programme*
- *Provide feedback.*

*‘Delegated tasks’ means activities that are delegated to a dispensing optician by an optometrist or ophthalmologist and which are done under the supervision of the optometrist or ophthalmologist (not necessarily direct supervision).*

*The responsibility for ensuring the knowledge and training of the dispensing optician to perform the task lies solely with the delegating health practitioner (optometrist or ophthalmologist) as does any interpretation, diagnosis, and treatment outcomes and subsequent management.*

*Permitted delegated tasks include:*

- *Use of diagnostic equipment including but not limited to, automated equipment, non-contact tonometer, digital imagery devices, colour vision tests, standardised visual perceptual tests*
- *Administration of pre-test questionnaires and obtaining of health information,*
- *Instruction of treatment plans*
- *Administration of diagnostic drugs under a Standing Order.*

*The following tasks are not permitted by way of delegation:*

- *Independent refraction to obtain a prescription*
- *Prescription of a medication*
- *Alteration of a therapy programme without consulting the prescriber*

- *Interpreting, or diagnosing from, clinical data other than that required to ensure the task has been completed correctly*
- *Direct physical eye contact and invasive clinical procedures.*

## Summary

- 10 The Board has provided details above, of amendments it proposes to make to the current *Dispensing Optician Scope of Practice*, including the reasons for these proposed amendments. Stakeholders are now invited to provide submissions on these proposed amendments.

## How to have your say

- 11 If you wish to make submissions, please provide them in writing **by 5.00 pm on 21 February 2020**. The Board does not guarantee that submissions received at the Board's offices after that date will be considered.

### Submissions can be sent to:

The Registrar  
Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board  
PO Box 9644  
Wellington 6141

Email: [registrar@odob.health.nz](mailto:registrar@odob.health.nz)