



OPTOMETRISTS
ASSOCIATION AUSTRALIA
QUEENSLAND & NORTHERN TERRITORY
ABN 54 009 657 265 ACN 009 657 265

LABOR IN OPTOMETRISTS' SIGHTS

Queensland's 600 Optometrists reluctantly stepped into the election arena today on the subject of ownership of Optometry practices.

Optometrists Association Australia (OAA) President, Merrilee Melville, said "the Beattie Labor Government had left her members with no other choice than to politicize their long-running dispute about who should own and operate Optometry practices.

"In December the Labor Government tabled the *Optometrists Registration Bill 2000* in Parliament, the effect of which is to allow for big business and multinationals to buy out Optometry practices throughout Queensland.

"In making that decision the Government relied on what had happened in southern States and other professions and its perception that big business and multinationals were already using the back door to take over Optometry.

"We do not consider that the motivation for changing our Act should be what is happening in other States/Territories and professions, nor do we consider that a profession that allows unlimited access by practitioners, absolute freedom of choice by patients and fixed Medicare fees, is one that is uncompetitive.

"Likewise we do not agree that a profession that attracts one complaint for every three hundred thousand eye examinations is one in need of an overhaul. If the Government has a problem with big business and multinationals, it should fix them not the profession," she said.

The OAA's greatest fear is that Optometry in regional and rural Queensland will simply disappear as large corporate structures shrink practice back to major centres and it cited the banking, dairy and petroleum industries as sorry examples of government experiments in deregulation.

Optometrists have been mobilized in a campaign that will target their estimated 2 million patients in the State with particular emphasis on marginal electorates.

The National-Liberal Coalition has already said that it would throw out the Bill ensuring that the ownership and operation of Optometry practices remains in the hands of Optometrists.

End.

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For immediate release. Authorised by Greg Johnson, Executive Director, OAA Queensland/Northern Territory, media enquiries invited to 07 3839 4411 or 0414 783 343.