



Wendy Edmond MP
Member for Mt Coot-tha



Queensland
Government

Minister for Health

Minister Assisting the Premier on
Women's Policy

Media release

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New role in sight for optometrists

Queensland optometrists will have a greater role in treating eye disease under changes announced today by Health Minister Wendy Edmond.

Ms Edmond said changes to Queensland regulations would allow appropriately trained optometrists to treat eye diseases such as glaucoma and conditions caused by diabetes.

"The change will provide Queenslanders with increased access to treatment in a medical area in which we have had lengthy waiting lists," Ms Edmond said. "Patients will not have to wait so long because there will be more health professionals available to treat them."

The Minister made the announcement at Queensland Vision 2003, the annual congress of the Optometrists Association Australia (Queensland and Northern Territory Division).

"The change will particularly benefit patients in regional communities," she said.

"Because optometrists are spread throughout the State, they increasingly find themselves in positions where they could be addressing not only short- and long-sightedness, but other issues of ocular health.

"For several years now, optometrists have been keen to extend their services to include prescribing certain drugs for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes.

"The change will also free up ophthalmologists so that they will be able to concentrate their specialist knowledge and skills on patients with complex conditions."

Ms Edmond said she had been advised that Victoria introduced similar changes in 1996 and there have been no complaints from the public or other medical professionals and no breaches of their guidelines.

The Queensland reform package includes 'clinical pathways' or treatment guidelines for all practitioners and a new course of study being developed by Queensland University of Technology. The Minister has urged QUT to endeavour to have the new course in place as soon as possible.

"I believe that the 'clinical pathways' approach is sensible and achieves the best possible results for patients," Ms Edmond said.

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