



The Australian Ophthalmic Nurses' Association

AGM Minutes 2025

Date: 15 November 2025

Time: 14:05 – 14:25

Venue: Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre Room 218

Chair: President – Lesley McDowell

Present: Approx 50 financial members

Meeting recorded: Minutes by Lesley McDowell

Quorum – Y

Presidents Report

Key Organisational Changes

- Membership now available upon purchase of non-member event ticket; \$85 to attend event as a non-member now includes 12 months' AONA membership from registration date
- Merged AONA WA into AONA Inc. from February 2025 – welcome to new committee member from WA, Naomi Kentfield. Approximately 18 new members from WA.

Major Projects & Initiatives

- Partnership with RANZCO/PAC Eyes organization; new outreach AONA committee member Peter to assist in facilitating communication and networking between Pacific Islands Ophthalmic Nurses and AONA.
 - Six complimentary memberships given to PAC Eyes nurses from Samoa, Tonga, Kiribati, Cook Islands, Fiji and Vanuatu for 2025/2026
 - Two complimentary tickets to AONA conference 15 November granted to Fijian delegates with the kind support of Fred Hollows Foundation

- AONA Inc also committed to RANZCO the facilitation of used/unwanted Ophthalmic equipment from Australia to the Pacific Islands
- Education Expansion:
 - 5 Tele-ED Events in 2025
 - 10 face-to-face clinical Meetings across NSW, VIC, Tas, SA, NT & WA.
 - Networking event in SA to encourage new membership
 - Collaboration with Macular Diseases Foundation to partner for patient support; Tele-ED session December 2025 and online learning packages available through AONA website

Representation & Engagement

- AONA now has active representation in every state except QLD – 259 active members
- President met with RANZCO board representative – Dr Nitin Sharma – to establish partnership between AONA and RANZCO to reduce the alarming rise in eye disease in the Pacific region. RANZCO is actively working with ophthalmologists, governments, Fred Hollows and industry organisations to support eye health systems in our neighbouring Pacific nations
- AONA continues to edit the national ophthalmic nursing newsletter annually, published in May 2025

Research & Grants

- Grants to attend conference here – Rose Knowles and Anna Huigen - \$1k each
- Encourage others to apply for grants, especially if undertaking Ophthalmic education – must be member for 2 years straight before qualifying for consideration of funding

Membership Report – Secretary

- 254 active members across Australia as of 15 November 2025, 217 expired.
- Discussion about cost of membership, suggestion from floor it was too reasonable at \$85, the price should increase. Cost of living and other

memberships barriers to price rise. 2026 review costing of membership, at next AGM any changes to membership costs will be tabled.

- 86 members have unknown state of work/residence; now it is mandatory that state of work/residence added to new members/renewing members so we can see where our members are around the country
- Members are encouraged to check if their state is attached to their membership and if not, update it.
- Discussion about how to restore 217 expired memberships – survey to establish reasons for non-renewal.
- Suggestion of SMS to advise members when membership has expired, plus reminder email if needed after 1-week post-membership expiry.
- Website – challenges with cart, members are making multiple orders for same product. Members are not aware of the process at the back end of the website. Advised that information on how orders are processed should be shown on the website (need for AONA to go into backend of website to approve all the transactions as the system does not allow automatic approvals).

Financial Report (circulated for members) – Secretary in Treasurer’s Absence

- Currently the balance of all AONA ANZ Business Accounts: \$138,264.86
- AONA WA money was transferred to AONA Inc upon merge in Feb 2025.
- Expenses: website development, catering and speaker gifts for face-to-face clinicals, grants for two speakers at conference for \$2000 total
- Remove Direct Debit option from website as payment option; causes undue delays to membership and event registration. Secretary constantly having to check between bank account and website to balance the orders and manually ‘complete orders’ once monies are received. It is difficult to refund people if paid twice or to wrong account. Propose PayPal/Credit card payment remains only – put to vote to members present? Y unanimously

Committee & Governance

- President expresses her thanks for the hard work from the committee members – thank you to Colleen Flanders for her time on the committee

- Increased committee meetings from quarterly back to second monthly
- All positions on committee to be declared vacant.
 - (i) 2 people standing down from the committee
 - Jenny Keller (NSW Representative)
 - Heidi Kern (Tasmanian Representative)
 - (ii) remaining committee members re-elected

Joanna McCulloch (JM), Lesley McDowell (LM), Bernie Hanratty (BH), Gabriela Kalofonos (GK), Lauren Clay (LC), Rhea Ortega (RO), Rose Knowles (RK), Sandie Smithers (SS), Peter Mitchell (PM), Naomi Kentfield (NK), Elizabeth Okely (EO)

(ii) Positions filled as follows:

- President: Lesley McDowell
- Secretary/Membership Secretary/Senior Management Officer: Joanna McCulloch
- Treasurer: Sandie Smithers (supported by Joanna McCulloch)

State Representatives:

- NSW: Bernie Hanratty, Gabriela Kalofonos
- VIC: Rhea Ortega
- WA: Naomi Kentfield
- SA: Rose Knowles and Tierney Mikolaj (new committee member)
- NT: Elizabeth Okely
- TAS: *no representative*

Additional Roles:

- Tele-ED Education: Bernie Hanratty (supported by Rhea Ortega)
- Newsletter Editor: President
- Website: Elizabeth Okely (supported by Lesley McDowell)
- Social media: Lauren Clay
- Industry representative: Gabriela Kalofonos
- Outreach representative: Peter Mitchell

Business without Notice

- Announcement of new life-member – Gabriela Kalofonos

Next Steps

- Meeting Closed: AGM concluded at 1425 November 15, 2025
- Next AGM will be held in Sydney June 2026, AONA will be holding its annual conference at this time. RANZCO is in New Zealand in 2026.