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OASA – Stakeholders Meeting 11 August – Press Release

VISION 2020: The Next 5 Years

The Ocularists Association of Southern Africa (OASA) made history on 11 August 2011 when it hosted its first national consultative conference. The QCTO, CHE, private providers of education and training, private nursing education institutions, Department of Home Affairs, Health Professions Council of South Africa and SAQA were amongst the representatives at the conference.

As a South African Qualification Authority (SAQA)-recognised professional body for the purposes of the NQF Act, Act 67 of 2008, OASA, through provisions of the said Act, seeks to co-operate with the Quality Councils such as the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) and the Council on Higher Education (CHE) in respect of qualifications and quality assurance in its occupational field.

The guest speaker was Professor Grant McLaren, an Ophthalmologist attached to the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. Professor McLaren passionately made the case for Ocularists detailing the critical service that they deliver not in the least restoring the dignity of people who have lost an eye.

It was emphasized that losing an eye is indiscriminate. People from all walks of life are affected by eye loss – rich and poor, male and female, young and old, white and black. OASA estimates that, given the South African population size, approximately 5000 prosthetic eyes are needed per year. The private sector is presently meeting around 25% of this need. Ocularistry is an aging profession in South Africa with the average age of practitioners being around 50.3 years with only 14 practitioners in South Africa.

Conference adopted the following Statement of Intent which committed all the affected parties to work towards a sustainable training and professionalization effort in Ocularistry over the next 5 year:

- Exploring the development of Ocularistry qualifications in both the Occupational and Higher Education sectors
- Developing a second professional designation to enable auxiliary professions such as Nursing to be able to register as professionals with OASA
- Exploring the registration of Ocularistry as a scarce and critical skill with the Departments of Higher Education and Training and, Home Affairs respectively
- Engaging with the Health Professions Council with a view to be registered as a professional sub-category with the appropriate professional board

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