

Complaints

Complaints against optometrists are infrequent, but from time to time a variety of problems or disputes can arise. When this does happen the first step is to contact the practice concerned and make your complaints known to them. Complaints about products may need to be discussed with sales staff or a store manager. If a problem relates to clinical matters then it is better to discuss this with the optometrist who examined your eyes.

If attempts to resolve matters prove unsatisfactory, NZAO provides a consumer service to investigate complaints about a member. There are several avenues available for complaints about an optometrist:

- If you feel your safety or your rights, as defined in the Code of Health and Disability Services, have been compromised or you have concerns about the clinical, ethical, or cultural competence of the optometrist concerned then your complaint should be addressed in the first instance, to the office of the Health and Disability Commissioner (HDC). (See: www.hdc.org.nz)
- If you wish to air a complaint regarding goods or services supplied by a member optometrist or if in the first instance you do not wish to go to the Health and Disability Commissioner, then the NZAO may hear the complaint and work towards a resolution.
- If you choose to engage in the NZAO complaints process the matter may proceed to the HDC and the Optometrists Registration Board under Section 34 of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act or you may be advised to consult with the Board or HDC as appropriate.

To prevent duplication of processes NZAO generally would not accept a complaint knowing it is already before the Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board or the Health and Disability Commissioner. However, the NZAO can envisage a variety of circumstances where matters referred to the Health and Disability Commissioner or the Optometrists Registration Board should also be heard by NZAO as the professional body, particularly in respect to breaches of our Code of Ethics.

To proceed with the NZAO complaints process write a letter providing concise information about your complaint. A letter of complaint may be posted, emailed or sent by fax to:

NZAO Complaints Committee
PO Box 1978
Wellington 6140
Fax: 04 473 2328
Email: info@nzao.co.nz

What happens when you complain to NZAO about a member?

The NZAO Complaints Committee consists of three Association representatives and an outside, independent lay person.

To assist the complaints committee, NZAO will, (with the consent of the person making a complaint), contact the optometrist concerned and provide them with a copy of the letter of complaint. The optometrist will be asked to respond to points raised in a complaint and to provide the NZAO with records relating to the case.

The committee then reviews all the information available to it, that relates to matters raised in a complaint and reaches a conclusion. The committee has no powers to force the NZAO Optometrist, or the complainant, to accept its conclusion, but it does aim to reach a clear resolution.