

FROM DISPENSER TO THE OWNER OF THREE PRACTICES



MEMBER PROFILE

Name: Belinda Musitano
Position: Director, Eyes@Optometry (Australind, Dalyellup, Falcon), qualified optical dispenser
Location: Western Australia
Years in industry: 26

1. What initially attracted you to a career in optical dispensing, and how did you enter the profession?

I deferred from university due to my family moving interstate and needing to pay for my living expenses. I was planning to do physiotherapy and always had an interest in the health sector. When looking for a job I applied for health-related positions. After studying Human Biology in Year 11 and 12 and physics, an optical job suited my interests. Initially I was employed in reception, but at the end of the year my employer offered me to attend TAFE for the Cert IV in Optical Dispensing. I jumped at the chance and never looked back.

2. What are your main career highlights?

I've had an interesting and varied path in the world of optics. I was managing an independent practice with three full time optometrists at 20 years old. Looking back, that responsibility at such a young age was a great achievement. I then moved into territory management with Transitions Optical and then Sola Optical. I loved being on the road, offering training and support to practices. I opened my own practice at the age of 25 in 2005, which felt exciting and risky in equal measure. Fast forward to today, and I now have three practices, 14 employees (including four optometrists), across the south west in WA. I've won Business Person of the Year for the local business awards twice, and was runner up once. I've also won multiple small business awards, including Small Business of the Year from 2018-2022.

3. What are your strengths as an optical dispenser and what excites you about your job?

The ability to sit down, build strong rapport and really uncover the patient's needs makes me a great dispenser. I'm excited every time I speak to patients and have them realise something that might improve their life through vision. This also builds patient loyalty and trust. Recently I saw a 12-year-old girl – new to my practice –

who was a high hyperope (+5.00). I mentioned contact lenses could be great for her dancing. Her mother remarked this has never been presented as an option before. She ordered new glasses and I booked her for a trial of daily wear lenses. She's returned, now wearing contact lenses for dancing, so happy and confident, and her mother was grateful for the recommendation that's made such a difference. I love we have the power to make a difference for our communities and, hence, I've created programs to give back and assist those less fortunate. This includes my Vision For Learning program (which includes school screenings and free glasses for children), as well as a Salvation Army clinic annually to provide glasses for those in need in my local area.

4. If you could provide advice to yourself at the beginning of your optical dispensing career, what would you say?

Ask more questions and really get to know the needs of your patient. Don't be scared to make recommendations, and don't pre-judge what they are going to spend.

5. What do you see as the key opportunities and challenges facing the future of optical dispensing in Australia?

The biggest challenge is ongoing training and support. Especially as a practice owner who doubles as an optical dispenser, it's nearly impossible to find practice management advice. Some current buying groups only wish to have optometrist-owned practices as part of their

groups. I find it extremely hard to find specific training for my team.

The key opportunity for optical dispensing is that it offers an exciting and varied career path. It allows you to make a real difference in people's lives by offering a product that works perfectly for them.

6. How do you ensure your skills and knowledge stay up-to-date and current in such a fast moving industry?

I look to several areas to keep up-to-date with knowledge. This includes:

- Attending trade fairs at every opportunity
- Subscribing to and reading industry journals and publications
- Having an active peer network of professionals to have discussions with
- Signing up to Optical Dispensers Australia

7. Why did you become a member of Optical Dispensers Australia, and what value do you see in the organisation?

I became a member after feeling frustrated with the lack of organisation, knowledge, tools, and training available over the years. An organisation like ODA was well overdue and I'm excited for what it may bring to our industry.

8. What would you say to others thinking of joining Optical Dispensers Australia?

There is an amazing selection of tools, webinars, and training opportunities. If you're looking for support and knowledge, I would highly encourage you to check it out. ■



Belinda Musitano believes her ability to build a strong rapport to uncover the patient's needs is one of her strengths as a dispenser.