

FROM DISPENSING LESSONS TO LIFE-LONG EYECARE



DISPENSER DETAILS

Name: Roxy Akers
Position: Owner/optical dispenser, Wangaratta Eyecare
Location: North-east Victoria
Years in industry: 18

1. What inspired you to pursue an optical dispensing career, and how has your perspective changed over time?

This was a career I unexpectedly found myself in. I graduated from university with a Bachelor of Education and really enjoyed primary school teaching but my career path changed as my optometrist husband and I took on a larger share of our practice. I found myself working more in the business and really loving the role. I learned everything on the job as I went along and then went on to study optical dispensing to continue to develop my skill set. My background in primary education has also shaped my career with a passion for children's vision. This led to me opening a dedicated children's vision clinic as part of our practice. During my time in the industry I have learned just how important a qualification in optical dispensing is as it gives you a great foundation of knowledge to build on.

2. What are the most influential moments and people that led you to this point?

Working as a husband-and-wife team is certainly not for everyone but thankfully it works for us. Paul has always encouraged and supported me in my role in the business and taught me how to understand the link between what happens in the exam room and out in the practice when dispensing, and that has definitely made me a better dispenser. We joined Eyebenefit for their support and networking and are so glad that we did! The support and education from a great team with a dispensing mindset has been so valuable to improve my dispensing through many conferences and opportunities to network with industry peers at these events.

3. What's something you know now that you wished you understood at the start of your career?

Hindsight is always a wonderful thing. It's certainly a job you are always learning on and every day is different.

4. Can you share a moment where you made a significant impact on a patient's life?

My most favourite moments of my career have been times when I've given children their first pair of glasses and see their faces light up when they experience clear vision for the first time.

5. What innovations in eyewear or technology are you most excited about, and why?

I love the fashion element of the job and selecting frames that make the patient look and feel amazing. Some ranges are starting to offer more customisation where you can design a frame that is made especially for your patient. People love the one-of-a-kind element that this offers. Lens technology is also ever-changing. At our practice we use Rodenstock lenses and individual customisation around these lenses with the DNEye technology has been very well received by our patients.

6. What skills or qualities do you believe are most important for an optical dispenser to thrive in today's market?

Knowledge and understanding of how your dispensing can impact a patient in their everyday life, from being able to perform an excellent frame adjustment that helps the frame sit on the patient's face without slipping, through to understanding how to choose a frame that will best suit the patient's prescription. So often you see poorly selected frames for fit or suitability for the prescription

and the knowledge around this and being able to educate the patient with this makes a very big difference in the outcome of the glasses they leave your practice with.

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

I stay up to date by participating in training from lens manufacturers about lens technology, frame suppliers about their products and the different features they have, as well as attending conferences run by suppliers and networking with peers at these conferences. I always come away learning something new I can put into practice in my job.

8. Why did you become a member of ODA, and what value do you see in the organisation?

I remember being at a trade show a number of years ago sitting in a session talking about how the industry had changed with dispensing being deregulated and what should be done about it. There were many people there who were passionate about the industry and placed value on qualifications and training, even though it wasn't mandatory. Without these qualifications and training we devalue the optical industry and what we have to offer people to make a difference in their lives. I'm so glad that ODA offer so much CPD for dispensers to continue growing and learning in our field. ■



Ms Roxy Akers works with a patient using the Rodenstock DNEye equipment. The new technology is well-received by staff and customers.

Founded in 2022, **OPTICAL DISPENSERS AUSTRALIA'S** mission is to transform the optical dispensing industry by creating a community where optical dispensers and their associates can feel supported and inspired through education, events, networking, and employment advice, plus more. Visit: www.odamembers.com.au