

# WHY THIS ORTHOPTIST PURSUED HER CERT IV

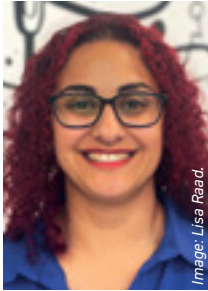


Image: Lisa Raad.

## DISPENSER DETAILS

**Name:** Lisa Raad  
**Position:** Orthoptist and optical dispenser  
**Location:** Pinpoint Vision (Earlwood, NSW) & Eyetreat (Norwest, NSW)  
**Years in industry:** 11

### 1. What initially attracted you to a career in optical dispensing?

I started wearing glasses when I was 12 years old, so I always had an interest, but it wasn't until I started working in an optometry practice – as an orthoptist – that I genuinely appreciated the role of optical dispensers. The finesse my colleagues brought to pairing frame shapes with prescriptions and facial features amazed me. I began referring to them (and then, optical dispensers in general) as the superheroes of the optometry practice.

So, during COVID isolation periods I decided to use that time to get my qualification and join the superhero ranks.

### 2. What are your main career highlights?

Being asked to present at the ODA Conference earlier this year and have such warm and positive feedback was incredible. I didn't think it could get any better, only to have it topped a few hours later by receiving the ODA 2023 National Medal for Optical Dispensing Excellence.

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

My biggest strength lies in the dedicated time I invest with each patient, explaining their prescription and its implications for frame selection, lens designs, and coatings. It excites me when a patient says, 'No one has ever told me that before', because I know they are leaving my practice with a deeper understanding of their condition, and why certain designs or lens features were recommended.

I also get excited to see the impact a pair of glasses can have on a person's life – whether it's by choosing colourful frames to express their creative side or having their symptoms disappear allowing them to enjoy their hobbies more.

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

I can't stress enough how important hands-on experience is – so wherever and whenever it's offered, jump at the opportunity. If you can learn a new skill inside your workplace, that's great, otherwise I suggest visiting a lab (the earlier the better) for a better understanding of the entire

process from start to finish. Visiting a lab helped me get a better understanding and visualise lens blanks, which impacted frame choices I would offer to patients.

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

I can see an opportunity for an increase in the number of qualified optical dispensers that play a slightly more clinical role within a practice. This would involve upskilling and being more confident with pre-testing – which could benefit several smaller optometry practices.

I'm optimistic the challenges that have plagued optical dispensers historically are slowly disappearing as a direct result of more individuals getting their Cert IV, and having ODA looking out for the interests of the profession – thanks to many strong connections within the optical industry.

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

Being a member of ODA definitely helps. The regular webinars are the best way to stay on top of different topics. I also try attend as many trade shows as possible to talk to different companies about changes in trends and materials being used for frames.

I'm part of a couple of groups on social media where optical dispensers will often share their wins, and the occasional horror story.

The platform is so important for dispensers and all optical staff to learn from each other, recommend certain products/labs and share troubleshooting tips.

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

I became a member of ODA because the team behind it are some of the most passionate and dedicated professionals I know. Their enthusiasm for the profession is contagious and they are the kind of like-minded people I wanted to learn from and grow with.

The organisation is helping increase the reputation of optical dispensers by empowering us with information and resources, as well as being a point-of-contact to help with any concerns.

### 8. What did it mean to win the 2023 ODA National Medal for Optical Dispensing Excellence?

To say I was speechless would be an understatement. Having the work I do and the love I have for the profession recognised by a group (and key individuals) that I have looked up to for a few years was so special.

### 9. What would you say to others thinking of joining ODA?

Why haven't you joined yet? Jump online right now and join before their next webinar and conference. You will not regret it. ■



Lisa Raad (right) being awarded the 2023 ODA National Medal for Optical Dispensing Excellence from ODA CEO April Petrusma. Image: ODA.