

30th November 2021

ADONZ Communication on MSD Flexi-wage Scheme
FOR EMPLOYERS LOOKING TO TRAIN AN APPRENTICE D.O.

Conference Guest speaker via Zoom: Terri Carter, Work Broker, MSD Northland
Quotes in yellow: Chanelle Armstrong, Community Liaison Officer, MSD Whangarei

Background

ADONZ went through an approval process with MSD giving them insight into the dispensing profession, industry dynamics & limitations faced, including:

- Industry statistics, 500 practices, over 800 optometrists, but only 203 DOs!
- We explained the important role a DO plays in an optometry practice, their job description, how they elevate the performance of a business
- Explained that the only pathway to our profession is through apprenticeship
- There is no equivalent NZ institution to provide the qualification, our provider ACOD is based in Australia
- ADONZ owns and provides training equipment for block courses taught in NZ
- Premises are provided by local sponsors (currently Zeiss and CMI Optical)
- We are currently experiencing a critical shortage of D.O.s
- 2020/2021 not enough graduates due to covid disruptions to education cycle.

What is Flexi-Wage?

"Funding is available through Work and Income to support employers and upskill New Zealand jobseekers into jobs. The funding scheme **Flexi-wage is a wage contribution paid to an employer and can also include training and ongoing in-work support. It's to support a person who might need some extra training to be able to do the job. It can also include ongoing advice and support to help new team members settle into your workplace."**

"In February 2021, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, and Minister Carmel Sepuloni, announced a \$300m expansion of our Flexi-wage programme to get 40,000 more New Zealanders into work over the next two years."

When will it start?

Available now. The Flexi-wage program was already up and running. They have just done an expansion.

What are the details?

"Through the Flexi-wage expansion, MSD widened eligibility to support people who aren't on a benefit but are considered as disadvantaged in the labour market."

They increased the subsidy rate, introduced set rates and durations, which provides certainty to businesses looking for staff.

Flexi-wage may be paid for 24 weeks at \$276 per week, totalling \$6624 (GST inclusive). In addition there would be increased funding support for training and education of up to \$5000. This allows a practice to take on an apprentice and work with them for a few weeks before enrolment into ACOD optical dispensing course.

"However, the support will be determined on a case-by-case basis and the business must meet eligibility criteria to qualify for Flexi-wage support."

- Have a job that's full time permanent, 30+ hours per week position available
- Haven't dismissed anyone to make the position available
- Pay at least minimum wage and preferably the living wage of \$22.10 an hour."

How will it work? What is the process?

"The process is simple, and it starts with a phone call to one of our Employment Services team members. From there we will assess eligibility and look at how else we can support New Zealanders into sustainable employment."

"MSD offers a free recruitment service, which ranges from advertising through to interview process to help you secure your next employee. Within every service centre within New Zealand, MSD has employment specialists who are here to help employers upskill people and provide a long-term sustainable workforce in New Zealand."

Pathways

"If you're interested and want to know more, get in touch with MSD today on 0800 778 008, or go to www.workandincome.govt/flexi wage."

Option 1: Practice lists their vacancy with MSD. MSD will work with the business owner to understand the type of staff member you are looking for and connect you with shortlist of people from MSD database who are potentially a good fit.

<https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/online-services/vacancy/index.html>

Option 2: Alternatively, the business may have a potential *future* employee lined up, that candidate would first need to sign up with MSD and be referred through the MSD recruitment process.

<https://workandincome.govt.nz/form/workandincome/govt/nz/form.req2?requestType=workandincome-govt-nz-new-swn-form>

Option 3: The scheme is also an option for a business that would like to move an existing employee into the dispensing role, rather than make them redundant. This would then require further training for the employee and more work hours.

Important to note - Our industry has a habit of keeping a new recruit waiting for several months before their enrolment into optical dispensing course. We do need to reduce this time frame, the recruit must start the D.O. course within the 24 week period otherwise the practice will miss out on the additional \$5000 training subsidy, which needs to be redeemed within that time frame. We recommend that you not wait any longer than 4 to 6 weeks to enrol them with ACOD.

ADONZ can be contacted on info@adonz.co.nz. We have a reasonable understanding of the program, so can answer some questions.

ACOD Dispensing Optician Course

To learn more about the ACOD dispensing optician course, scroll to the NZ section
<https://acod.edu.au/current-courses/>

Some things to note:

- Course comprises 14 units, delivered via online and practical workshops
- Duration is flexible, can be structured for 18 to 24 month programs part time
- There are 4 workshops of 4 days duration each
- There are variety of assessments used – quiz, written tests, observation and demonstration, case studies, workplace logbook
- Good to be competent in NCEA Level 2 Maths
- LLN assessment – a simple entry quiz to ensure competency in “language, literacy and numeracy” which helps ascertain what level of support in areas of weakness the student may need throughout the course
- USI – Unique Student Identifier number, ACOD requires this as part of the enrolment process
- Course cost is AU \$8000 (NZ \$8400)

Compiled by Vineet Chauhan

Immediate Past President

On behalf of