

when the suggestion was put to them that they kick in \$500 each to establish a fighting fund, only one did so (the meeting convenor). So much for fighting the good fight.

You can bet there's going to be some big biffos soon when the federal government takes on lawyers and the judiciary over a new board setting standards for the legal profession around Australia.

As the matter stands, the new board will have a majority of government appointees and will include a consumer representative for the first time, whereas (naturally) lawyers wanted to have the majority of membership. The Law Council of Australia and the Council of Chief Justices will be guaranteed only one nominee each on the proposed National Legal Services Board – the same number of seats dedicated to consumer and regulatory experts – while federal and state governments will appoint up to seven members.

It seems the very thought of 'outsiders' having any say on how lawyers go about their business is beyond the pale in the view of many of them, after all they are lawyers and they can do whatever they like, seems to be their cock-eyed view of what the world is about – witness some of the appalling behaviour of the various law associations as they go about self-disciplining the profession.

And in an all-time great display of arrogance, the nine biggest legal firms in the land have written to the secretary of the federal attorney-general's department claiming that much of the proposed controls on members of the legal profession should not apply to them as their clients are in the main are bigger and much more knowledgeable than those of smaller practices and therefore don't have the know-how.

Nice one ladies and gents, just the sort of thing to go down well with

a bunch of Labor attorneys-general when they are together wearing their COAG hats.

The stock market doesn't seem very interested in two listed ophthalmic companies, with Eye-care Partners' 20c shares hovering around 9-10c, while Vision Group is down to 60-65c recently from an all-time high of \$5.50 a few years back.

It seems that in general amalgamating practices run by individuals (either sole or in small groups), bringing in a bit of supposed 'management expertise' and then listing what's left on the stock market, is turning out to be a bit of a non-event, with little to indicate there are better times ahead (i.e. better share prices).

At first glance, you would think the listed ophthalmic companies should be goldmines, but the market has obviously decided they are not, setting the share price accordingly.

In any case, investors are too intent on what is happening in China in regard to demand for metals and the effect of that on the likes of miners BHP Billiton and Rio Tinto than to take much notice of small-cap shares such as the two mentioned above.

And fixed-interest rates are high, making them the most attractive they've been for years.

I've just been looking at what must be one of the most 'different' websites ever – that of the *Optometric Physician Newsletter* in the Hew Hess of Hay.

It contains all sorts of material, but the *pièce de résistance* is the handle of the optometrist who runs it – he's called the 'chief medical editor'.

How's that for a bit of misleading nonsense?

But there's an even more bizarre website in the US for (drum-roll, please maestro) no less an organisation than that of the American Board of Certification in Medi-

cal Optometry! I hasten to assure you you're not seeing things; that's what it's called.

Madness?

I couldn't possibly comment on that, but that may well be right, to quote Prime Minister Urquhart in 'House of Cards'.

Nothing to do with optics, but it just shows how stupid this nation has become: As *Insight* was going to press, it was learned that Airservices Australia has taken the extraordinary step of banning model airplanes from entering Canberra airspace during the forthcoming planned visit of United State President Barack Obama.

Also, a prohibition on use of gliders, hot-air balloons and model aircraft during President Obama's two-day visit.

The ban has been placed on 45 nautical miles (83.34 kilometres) of airspace that surround Canberra airport!

Why is it that publications insist on grovelling to people who use the 'Dr' title?

Apparently the offenders believe it's OK to simply refer to a person who is not a medical practitioner or holder of a PhD by just their names, such as John Smith or Matilda Lee, but insist on using the 'Dr' honorific for those people, no matter what the circumstances.

When a medico or a PhD attends, say, a cricket match or a game of football, he/she isn't there in their vocational guise – they've left that behind, surely – so why include their honorifics?

What is really bad form is when there is a group photo, with the 'non-honorificers' being given just their names in the caption, while the 'Drs' are given their honorifics. And odds are the 'Drs' couldn't care less about it all; they're much bigger than that – well most of them.

Regrettably there's likely to be a casualty among wholesalers by the end of this month, with

a long-standing company closing its doors. The rot set in when the company was bought by another that didn't ever seem to get to grips with the optical industry (sound familiar?).

Yet another example of not sticking to your knitting ending up bringing disaster.

By now the MIDO fair in Milan will have drawn to a close, with the usual cut-throat negotiations over agencies nearing completion.

It's an annual event that brings out the best (or worst, depending on the outcomes for parties involved) in negotiations as deals are thrashed out for the coming year(s). There's always some blood on the floor at the end of it all, but the spoils care usually worth it.

And of course there's always the fall-back 'valuable-contacts-were-made' to justify the costs.

It's an expensive business to go to MIDO from here, but offsetting that is it brings the opportunity to go to Italy. Worth the costs on its own!

I hear a strong rumour that a certain group of practices is up for sale.

Nothing more to add at this stage, although if it's true then the ownership will have been one of the shortest ever.

One of the early signatories on a petition by an online optical retailer in the United Kingdom seeking mandatory inclusion of PDs in prescriptions commented: "Good luck with the campaign. What on earth is the point of a prescription that does not contain all the necessary information? Glasses-wearers are being ripped off."

A good point perhaps, although there is argument to the contrary.

Perhaps the new Optometry Board of Australia could put its collective mind to the matter, rather than spending time making registered optometrists gain 12 of the 40 CPD points they need for continuing registration via face-to-face tuition.