President's Message

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QUO VADIS ACPSEM?

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

A very successful and productive Year 2009 is behind us during which the Australasian College of Physical Scientists and Engineers in Medicine continued the process (started some 10 years ago) of transformation from a successful professional association and fraternity to become an externally-oriented professional organisation responsible for standards, quality, training and education of medical physicists and biomedical engineers in Australia and New Zealand. This is and has been an exciting era in the history of the College, aiming to become the leading medical physics association in the Asia Pacific region and to be seen as the main partner for the government in discussions about issues concerning our professions including workforce, infrastructure, standards, quality, technology implementation, research and development and others.

To begin with, I would like to thank Howell Round for his enormous contribution during his 6 years on the ACPSEM Council. He is not, however, completely off the hook yet and his involvement will continue as he will be chairing a working party looking to review the ACPSEM constitution. Our constitution had its last major overhaul over 30 years ago and last year the Council received advice on governance suggesting that in order to ensure that the ACPSEM is at the level of modern twenty-first century companies, the constitution should be reviewed and updated. Tireless as he is Howell also represents us on as chair of the professional development committee of the

Asia-Oceanic Federation of Organisations for Medical Physics (AFOMP).

Deepest thanks belong to Tomas Kron, who has done a fantastic job as the College President, with numerous achievements, including a successful request for funding for the so-called RO-STAMP project (Radiation Oncology—Strengthening the Australian Medical Physics Workforce), receiving over 2 million dollars from the Federal Government towards the continuation of Radiation Oncology Training, Education and Accreditation Program (TEAP), finalization of the current Radiation Oncology accreditation scheme (ensuring that we capture and give opportunity to all experienced physicists to achieve accreditation) and also towards establishment of the ACPSEM Education Unit to assist with ongoing education needs of all College members. The other major developers/contributors to this project were Steve Howlett, Angela Wong and Carol James.

Special thanks to outgoing specialty chairs Anthony Wallace and Paul Cardew who were essential in negotiation with their specialties and the Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) to kick off a TEAP related project in

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Nuclear Medicine and Radiology specialties, resulting in ~\$180,000 approved project funding towards a review of corresponding training and accreditation programs and in the appointment of John Cormack as the project officer who has so far done a tremendous job in setting the grounds for the future training program. This will aim to have the first 2 years of Nuclear Medicine and Radiology (NM&R) TEAP common for both specialties and the physicists will specialize either in Nuclear Medicine or Radiology in their third year of training. This training structure will enable us to produce physicists with strong background in both specialties, better equipped to deal with the needs of modern imaging practices.

Many thanks also to David Causer, an outgoing Radiation Protection specialty chair, who managed successfully to revive and, at least in part, review accreditation in radiation protection. The recently established Asia Pacific Special Interest Group has been active as well and under the leadership of Catherine Lawford and has commenced work on supporting colleagues in our region with particular interest in a project in PNG (moving forward thanks Simon Downes' determination).

We are indebted to Lee Collins who has resigned as the Chair of the Radiology Accreditation Panel after many years of service and wearing scores of professional hats, making it very difficult to choose one. So let me highlight at least Lee's participation on the NM&R working party designing the new TEAP and preparing the proposal to DoHA to fund the training scheme. Stefan Eberl has also resigned after many years as the very productive chair of the Nuclear Medicine Accreditation Panel as he kindly accepted a nomination for the post of the ACPSEM vice-president. Lyn Oliver continues to drive the Radiation Oncology Accreditation Panel, finishing off the old accreditation scheme by the end of 2010 (so please send your applications in).

I would also like to express gratitude and wish all the best to our outgoing branch chairs: May Whitaker (NSW; who wishes to be active with the ACPSEM Medical Research Foundation and external relations committee to assist with fund-raising and PR activities), Tim Williams (SA), John Burrage (WA), Daniel Schick (QLD), Rhonda Brown (VIC; who has left us for rainier pastures in Ireland).

The office staff have done a tremendous job in the last year, supporting the members, the Council, the TEAP projects, various educational activities, exams, meetings, Towards the end of 2009, Mia Fedeale, one of our administrative workers has left us and I would like to thank her for her contribution and wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

And last but not least, I would like to thank the continuing council members (who can possibly compete with John Coles' corporate memory) and all of those who

contributed last year towards the College business, activities, the journal, website, database, examinations, training, conference and workshop organizations, representations on numerous national and international committees.

The onset of Year 2010 has meant a major changing of the guard for the College. As a result, let me introduce to you and welcome the following colleagues that will bear various offices within the College (they will undoubtedly have big shoes to fill, but they are undaunted, keen and determined): Stefan Eberl—the vice president and the chair of all specialty chairs; new branch chairs: Robin Hill (NSW), Peter Collins (SA), Simon Woodings (WA), John Kenny (QLD) and Luke Wilkinson (VIC); new specialty chairs: Richard Smart (Nuclear Medicine), Luke Wilkinson (Radiology) and Kent Gregory (Radiation Protection); new accreditation panel chairs: Daniel Schick (Radiology) and Leighton Barnden (Nuclear Medicine), and Marissa Bartlett as the Nuclear Medicine Accreditation Panel TEAP Coordinator. As the next exciting development, in 2010 we are also starting with an establishment of a second ACPSEM office at our headquarters in Mascot (NSW) with Berlos Davis appointed as the Education Officer and Melissa Prior, Amy Milner, Josephine Ardizzone providing project, administrative and accounting support. I certainly hope that they will enjoy working for the ACPSEM.

This year, many of our members have also taken on important roles in international organizations with Barry Allen becoming the President of International Union for Physical and Engineering Sciences in Medicine (IUPESM) and Tomas Kron and Natalka Suchowerska appointed to roles with International Organisation for Medical Physics (IOMP)—just to mention few.

Where are we now?

In addition to some of the College activities mentioned above, I would like to highlight some of our achievements last year:

- ACPSEM's new Webpage is working well and more input from members and specialties is needed to improve the pages and to keep the information up to date.
- The "Combined Scientific Meeting (CSM)" in Brisbane was very successful and well received by all participants. It is anticipated to have a combined meeting again in Sydney 2012.
- EPSM 09 went well. Over 290 participants attended—this is a good turnout considering the CSM meeting was held in October 2009. EPSM also held the DoHA funded IMRT "Summer School" workshop for 2 days, which received very good feedback in the post-conference survey.

- A Professional Conference Organizer (company called ICMS) is now contracted for two years for EPSM and, along with Engineers Australia, has started working with Victorian (EPSM 2010) and SA (EPSM 2011) organizing committees. EPSM conference 2010 in Melbourne will be at the same time as the Australian Institute of Physics Meeting (December); EPSM 2011 will be held in Darwin (August 2011).
- The APESM journal will now be run under the umbrella of the major international publisher, Springer. The journal has also become listed in the Australian Research Council list for Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA journal list).
- Quality Programs in Radiation Oncology have been initiated: the report on the National Dosimetry Centre is currently with the Health Minister; and the National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA) has started the pilot program for standards involving up to 15 centres across Australia.
- The Radiation Oncology TEAP review is nearly completed (performed by Allen Consulting Group) and we are currently eagerly awaiting the final report.
- Education Unit (EU) has been established. One of the roles of this unit will be the support of the RO TEAP program; however, in addition to this the unit will also provide training and education to other members of the workforce, thereby offering opportunities for up-skilling and continuing professional development.
- Request for funding submitted to the Workforce Division of DoHA requesting to fund 41 medical physics registrar positions in nuclear medicine and radiology over the next 5 years (and associated program support staff).
- Register of qualified medical physicists is up and running. We are also in discussion with the Radiation Regulators Forum to include medical physicists as qualified experts (e.g. in relation to the Code of Practice no 14) into the National Directory for Radiation Protection. This would assist with the principle of nationally consistent registration arrangements that ensure that only those medical physicists who are qualified can work unsupervised anywhere in Australia.
- SA branch became SA/NT branch with the first application for the ACPSEM membership by a physicist in the NT just submitted.

Where are we going?

Last year the Council drafted a vision for the ACPSEM which was sent to members for discussion. We are currently reviewing our goals and objectives, but in short we will be striving to improve equality of services for all professional groups represented by the ACPSEM. A brief

summary (not in the order of importance) of the main objectives is provided here for your perusal and comments:

- Continued improved corporate governance: risk management, OHS, HR policies, running two offices with more staff; all council members will have governance training. Working towards a sustainable surplus each financial year.
- Revision of the ACPSEM constitution.
- Increase of membership (up to 700 by 2015), increase number of associate members upgrading to full membership. Increase percentage of fellows to 15% of all members, Expand membership at universities. Increase number of members with academic (honorary) appointments. Conduct a review of the membership admission process.
- Organization of projects and reviews through establishment of ‘task groups’ as a mode of operation for ACPSEM—task groups are convened for a limited period of time to report on specific issues. They would typically work closely with a specialty, are sponsored by a member of council and report to council.
- Implementation of educational programs through new ACPSEM Education Office, utilizing e-learning resources (e.g. Moodle).
- Continued discussion with DoHA regarding TEAP funding for Nuclear Medicine and Radiology. Revamp of TEAP for these specialties.
- Radiation Oncology Quality Assurance position papers are needed; individual task subgroups to be formed.
- Planning of and bidding for international conferences to be held in Australia. Organization of combined workshops with other organizations.
- Raising \$20,000 for the ACPSEM Medical Research Foundation.
- Acknowledging members’ research success; promoting research as one of the main areas of members’ activities and contribution.
- Finalizing procedures for overseas qualified physicists; setting up mutual recognition of accreditation, or parts thereof, with selected countries.
- External Relations Committee to be functional.
- Assistance in organisation of training for IAEA fellows and UICC and WHO trainees.
- Establishment of ACPSEM structure that ensures independence of Professional Standards Board and have all accreditation and registration procedures running smoothly and on time.
- Publish more position papers (compare with item task groups under vision)—two annually by 2015.

And finally: Have more than 20% of members involved in some college activity. Our membership in the ACPSEM cannot be based upon an expectation of “getting what you

paid for”, and expect that it will all happen just by itself. We need to put extra time into making sure that the organisation is successful. I trust that those who participate will receive so much more in return. If you have not experienced this for yourself, I encourage you to contact any of our council officers, your branch chairs or secretaries.

On a personal level as President, I hope that in addition to my experience (in the areas of medical physics, education and research), dedication and the “glass-half-full” approach, I will also be persistent and determined, making sure that my enthusiasm will not be diminished by any roadblocks that must inevitably come in a role like this. And I cannot achieve that without your support. With many years in the physics industry, I have come to realize that most difficulties/disappointments are due to differences in perception of reality and our feelings of what that reality

should be. However, when digging deep and separating the relevant from the non-essential, one eventually finds that things are not as horrible as they look and that all can be resolved when there is will and common sense and a bigger picture in mind.

Finally let me finish with a quote:

For those who want some proof that physicists are human, the proof is in the idiocy of all the different units which they use for measuring energy (Richard Feynman, *The Character of Physical Law*, 1964).

Wishing you prosperous and eventful Year 2010, in which We (the College) can achieve all that we have set out to do, inviting You all to be “ready, willing and able” to participate, contribute and communicate.