

# ORIA Update

## The ORIA: A sustainable future for eye research?



The Ophthalmic Research Institute of Australia has started the year with a full and optimistic calendar. Our organisation is a registered not-for-profit charity with deductible gift recipient status. In our 68<sup>th</sup> year, we are working in a more sustainable way. With the desire to provide the best services while limiting our environmental impact and utilising the limited resources we have, we are working to ensure Australian eye research is funded.

A large pile of papers used to arrive on the desks of all members of the Scientific Committee each year for grant review. With around 50 grants to review, each around 10 pages in length and 10 to 15 members on the committee, there were a lot of papers! The ORIA then moved to posting CDs. Now we have gone online! Committee members then flew in from across Australia and New Zealand to meet. Our current grant scheme involves grant PDFs submitted by email and then sent electronically to the Scientific Committee. During the grant committee meeting, scores are entered directly into a purpose-built spreadsheet. COVID fast-tracked our efforts towards sustainability as the committee meeting was held online – reducing greenhouse gas emissions associated with travel!

Our annual reports, review reports and board minutes in the past were printed. Now they are available as PDFs and our past paper records are being digitally scanned along with our historic archives. Our next project for a sustainable future is to develop an online grant submission and review system. The ORIA would welcome grant applications that progress sustainability in eye care and research.

In 2020, we launched our new e-newsletter the *ORIA NEWS*. The newsletter allows us to communicate with our members in a sustainable way. This

electronic communication tool will continue to be our main format of connecting with members in 2021.

Following the AGM, we hosted our first ever online educational event: ORIA – Australian Eye Research Breaking New Boundaries! Our members logged on to enjoy presentations of ORIA-funded research topics by Prof Robert Casson (*Cone Rescue with Laser Photobiomodulation in Murine and Human Retinal Dystrophy*), Dr Fred Chen (*Precision medicine in retinal diseases*), Dr Tom Edwards (*Pre-clinical validation of gene therapy for Bietti crystalline dystrophy (BCD)*) and I presented my research on the topic *Ultraviolet light and the cornea: Understanding what can go wrong*.

Sustainability is a priority for the ORIA. We will continue to find new ways to support our members to ensure a sustainable future for eye research!

**Prof Stephanie Watson**  
Chair, ORIA