

RANZCO and ORIA.

Back in 1946 Dr Kevin O'Day wrote a paper in which he criticised the then Ophthalmological Society of Australia (OSA) for not doing anything to foster research (1). The college had not formed yet however, ophthalmologists of the day knew the importance of research in the Ophthalmic Sector.

In 1950 The Ophthalmic Research Institute of Australia (ORIA) was conceived when the OSA decided to establish an independent research fund for ophthalmic purposes, having had problems obtaining funds from the NHMRC. (2)

Three years later, on the 15th of November 1953 in Adelaide with their Articles of Association in place, the ORIA was formed with the three signatories, Sir Norman Gregg, Dr James Flynn and Dr Darcy Williams. Its purpose was to ensure that ophthalmic research had a forum, funding and a future. Soon after Dr Archie Anderson was elected to the Board and was appointed Chairman of the new ORIA, further 70 applications for membership were received and the first Research Committee was appointed. The ORIA had begun its vital work.

An anonymous donor provided £100,000 and started the DW Fund in 1956 in order to fund research in the field under the stewardship of the ORIA board. Throughout the years the ORIA has funded millions of dollars in research and supported many RANZCO fellows in their research work making a significant impact in the medical research field.

In 1968 The College began as the Australian College of Ophthalmologists (ACO), it was to among many other roles, “encourage research; (iii) encourage collection of literature; (iv) publish a journal; (v) encourage overseas ophthalmologists to visit Australia”, thus it was aligned with the purpose, aims and mandate of the ORIA (3).

The ORIA formed an early relationship with the new College and in the early 1970's the ORIA Chair attended the R/ACO Board meetings as a non-voting observer. Furthermore, over the years the College has provided significant funds for grants and has had named grants including the most recent 2020-2021 Grant for work into, “**Diabetes, Obesity and Metabolism Translational Research Unit (DOMTRU)**”, at Western Sydney University under Chief Investigator Dr Shweta Kaushik.

Throughout the years the ORIA and the College have worked to create significant change. For example, during the late 70's and early 80's, “the QEC introduced research as one aspect of the pre-vocational training that was acceptable for entry to the College vocational training. At that time the QEC thought that the College should urge the Federal Government to provide funds for identification and documentation of heritable blinding diseases while the College organised and controlled the research and at the same time to encourage the ophthalmic industry to provide funds for ophthalmological research. Cooperation between the College and the ORIA was needed so that research could be organised with continuity and security.” (4)

During his time as Chair 1980-1986, Ronald Francis Lowe, foundation member of the ORIA established working relationships were developed and continued to grow between the College and the ORIA. Meetings between both parties in 1980 resulted in the ORIA becoming the *Research Arm of the College* -a term to be used until now. (5)

At the 1991 AGM the members agreed that 2 RACO/RANZCO representatives should be on the ORIA board with full board voting rights, this has continued today with our current RANZCO nominated board members being Prof Andrea Vincent and Dr Bill Glasson.

In 1995 Ms Renata Mathewson became the EO. In the late 90's the College funding for operating costs of the ORIA, providing office resources and supported the ORIA's fund raising arm, the Gift of Sight and provided funds for research grants. In 1997 the ORIA had a brand-new logo and had its own web presence hosted on the RANZCO college site. Fellows could find out the outcome of grants and work being conducted by browsing the RANZCO website.

In 2001 the college changed its name from RACO to RANZCO and continued to provide funding for ORIA grants, through the RANZCO foundation once it launched in 2002. At this time a new executive officer began, Ms Anne Snape who worked closely with College staff, initially at Commonwealth Street and then Chalmers Street premises.

At the time of the College's 50th birthday in 2019 RANZCO was managing all aspects of the ORIA under a service agreement after the retirement of the executive officer and before the employment of current CEO Diane Harapin.

The ORIA name is synonymous with RANZCO, with all ORIA members being members of the college and every grant funded by the ORIA having at least one RANZCO fellow as an investigator. Currently we are working together on an improved partnership and an MOU for the next stage of our development.

- (1) Kevin O'Day, "The future of Australian Ophthalmology", Transactions of the Ophthalmological Society of Australia, Vol VI 1946, pp104-107.
- (2) Margaret Dunn, *History of the College*, 2019, p11.
- (3) Margaret Dunn, *History of the College*, 2019, p14.
- (4) Margaret Dunn, *History of the College*, 2019, p57.
- (5) Ophthalmologists' Exchange, Vol 16, #2, The Ophthalmic Research Institute of Australia (ORIA), November 1988, pp 15-16.