

Editorial

On Convergence... On the Strength of Community

In May 2008, orthoptists from around the world will converge on the Belgium city of Antwerp to participate in the XI International Orthoptic Congress. The theme of the Congress is 'Reflections on the Diversity of Current Orthoptics', offering our profession the opportunity to reflect on the evolution of orthoptists' roles in the eye health care team and the diversity of our practices.

The Congress will give us more than just the chance to reflect on our roles, however. Such meetings, including national conferences, also provide us with the opportunity to share ideas and experiences, to 'benchmark', to deliberate on and discuss issues, and to learn new information. These opportunities can be had in and between plenary sessions, during social functions, and well after we have left the venue for our home cities.

Congresses enable us to network, both for professional and scientific or research purposes. Congresses help to strengthen and consolidate our sense of 'orthoptic community'. This is important. Working in relatively small organisations and often separated by significant distance, we can run the risk of becoming isolated and out of touch with our colleagues and profession. Networking and communicating with colleagues who share common interests and passions builds 'orthoptic community' and can bring us home with renewed enthusiasm of our daily work and positive experiences we can share with work colleagues.

Readers may be wondering how this relates to the Australian Orthoptic Journal. Our present publication (few may recall!) actually evolved from our first publication in 1959, the Transactions of the Orthoptic Association of Australia. This was a conference proceedings publication consisting of a record of the presentations at our annual scientific conference. Our Journal has this strong link with our national conference. It is indeed a scientific publication, but it is also a publication for our profession. Orthoptists' core business is patient care, so we encourage the documentation of not only original research papers, but also patient case studies, clinical perspectives and literature reviews – all of these contribute to the continuing education of a professional clinician.

Some two decades after that first publication in 1959, the 1980 issue of the Australian Orthoptic Journal contains an editorial and a story of an international orthoptist who attended various Australian conferences, who shared ideas, broadened our horizons, became a close colleague of and good friend to many. This story will repeat itself many times as orthoptists devoted to their profession pack their cases to converge on Antwerp.

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