

(Richard) Lloyd Cahill, MBE, President of the Australian College of Ophthalmologists, 1974 - 1975

(Richard) Lloyd Cahill was born on 30 January 1914 at Rushcutters Bay in Sydney, one of five boys, four of whom became doctors. (As this is being written, he is in his 98th year.) Lloyd studied for his medical degree at Sydney University, graduating in 1938. He enlisted in the AIF in June 1940 and was appointed Medical Officer as Captain in the 2/19 Battalion which was sent to Malaya in February 1941. This Battalion was almost decimated by the Japanese advance and following capitulation he became a Prisoner of War (POW). In April 1943 Lloyd was one of 10 medical officers (with one dentist) who were sent from Singapore to Thailand as members of "F" Force made up of 7,000 POWs. The train journey, in cramped steel rail trucks, took five days and on arrival at Banpong the POWs were force-marched 300 kilometres over 18 nights to northern Thailand where they were put to work building the Burma Thailand Railway. Lloyd had managed to take a lot of instruments and drugs from the hospital where he was first imprisoned, which was fortunate, but there were many deaths with the outbreak of cholera and dysentery. He was awarded Member of the Order of the British Empire which was gazetted on 6 March 1947.

After demobilisation on 9 November 1945, Lloyd returned to St Vincent's Hospital before departing for Bristol, England to become an ophthalmologist. After three years he returned to St Vincent's as an ophthalmologist, where he tackled the radiation treatment of retinoblastoma, and later other tumours. He contributed greatly to the knowledge in these fields, and later could assess the mazer and lazer techniques as they became available. His level-headed and common-sense approach together with two other colleagues constituted a jury of informed opinion which enabled the choice with uncanny accuracy of the good and enduring technologies from the dangerous and ephemeral. Lloyd Cahill took over the senior role of the department, bringing tact and diplomacy to an area of administrative conflict and he retired from St Vincent's in 1979, but he continued in private practice for another 10 years.

In his Presidential address, Dr Cahill referred to the confused world of the 1970s: the era of Billy Graham; of war torn Vietnam and Cambodia; the technological advances that enabled man to travel to the moon and back; but he reflected that all the advances in science had not solved man's basic conflicts, or the world's fiscal problems which appeared to be more complex than ever, in spite of the advent of computers. He considered that if world leaders could heed the College motto of "Ut Videant" – ("that they may see") and all these words imply, the planet may be a happier place.

To Lloyd Cahill the responsibilities of the ophthalmologist were to embrace the care of vision in all its complexities: that this required the understanding of the entire being, not just a technical approach, for vision was more than the mere act of seeing. He advocated that one could be mesmerized by the ever increasing numbers of sophisticated machines, which at the pressing of the appropriate button would deliver the theoretical answers, but unless the information was received by understanding and experienced personnel, it would come to nothing because initiative and intelligence was required. His message was therefore that the *raison d'être* of the College was to teach, to set standards of academic requirements and to judge the capacity of men who were to be entrusted with the visual care of their patients. He foresaw that it would be on the standard of training and adherence of the tenets of the College and the Society that ophthalmologists would be judged.