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Stephen James Best, President of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists, 2012 – 2014

Stephen Best was born at Greymouth on the west coast of New Zealand on 13 November 1957. He was educated at Bayfield High School in Dunedin and Tawa College in Wellington before studying for a B SC degree in Human Nutrition at Otago University of Science, Dunedin from 1976 to 1979. Stephen then gained a MBChB from Otago University Medical School in 1983 with three clinical school years in Christchurch. He became a House Surgeon at Christchurch Hospital from 1983 to 1985 with a three-month rotation in Greymouth; and an Ophthalmology Registrar from 1985 to 1989. He completed his ophthalmology training in the Auckland/Waikato Northern Program in 1990, then after two years of fellowship at Wills Eye Hospital, Philadelphia, USA with the Glaucoma and Neuro-ophthalmology services, he returned to Auckland Hospital as a full time consultant for 18 months. Subsequently, as a committed sub-specialist, his time has been divided between Greenlane Clinical Centre Eye Department, Auckland District Health Board, and Auckland Eye, a private sub-specialty Ophthalmology Clinic and Surgical Centre (Oasis). He also participates in teaching as a registrar supervisor and is an Honorary Senior Clinical Lecturer with the University of Auckland, regularly teaching medical and optometry students.

Stephen was a College Basic Sciences Physiology Examiner for 10 years and contributed to the Scientific Program Committee for 10 years. He has been on the NZ Branch Executive since 1998, and as Chair from 2003-2005, introduced the ongoing support with the NZMA. He has been on the RANZCO Council and a member of the Board since 2004 and was Treasurer from 2009 to 2011, and was Vice-President from 2011 to 2012 before becoming President.

The first year of Stephen's Presidency was eventful, negotiating a number of staffing and political issues while based across the Tasman, in Auckland. Major issues dealt with included:

- a comprehensive submission to the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) regarding the Optometrists' proposal to change Glaucoma Guidelines for optometrists to independently treat patients with chronic glaucoma or those at risk of developing it. Because of the College's commitment to integrated collaborative care for glaucoma patients, and the belief that a change in guidelines should be by education not legislation, involvement in optometry education continues;
- as the College submission and extensive lobbying regarding the guidelines was ignored by AHPRA, in the line of patient safety RANZCO together with the Australian Society of Ophthalmologists (ASO) made the hard decision to take legal action against the Optometry Board of Australia (OBA) in the Supreme Court of Queensland;
- a submission drafted to Treasury, regarding the Australian Government announcement that a cap to tax deductions on work-related self-education expenses would be part of targeted reforms in 2013, brought about a delay in the short term to allow further submissions;
- a Memorandum of Understanding with the All India Ophthalmological Society promoted closer relationships with RANZCO with the potential for RANZCO Fellows to observe ophthalmic practice in India;
- a three-year Strategic Plan, created by the Board and Senior Management with facilitation by a consulting group, divided into four key areas of: Education, Training and Research; Membership/Fellowship and Standards; Relationships and Advocacy; and Development, is to form the basis of RANZCO's core projects and focus over the coming years;
- focus on the expansion of educational activities and bolstering of CPD activities with future assistance to Fellows to manage practice accreditation are part of the Strategic Plan.

In his first Presidential address, Stephen welcomed the new graduates then pointed out that the work of trainers, supervisors, friends and family were a critical part of each graduates' success and it was the

enormous commitment of so many fellows that enabled the graduates to be standing where they were. He urged them therefore, not to forget their roots and to contribute to the College either by serving on committees or volunteering their time to assist those in the region to establish the kind of excellent training systems we have.

He advised the graduates to continue to be students because ophthalmology was an evolving field and they would need to continue to learn to keep pace with changes and to ensure they were delivering the best possible outcomes for their patients. Stephen advised them that putting the patient first was the best way to ensure that they would be working in alignment with the ethics of medicine and the College Code of Conduct: that the College provided them with the mechanisms to continually improve their clinical and professional skills while providing strict guidance on professional and ethical standards. However, they must also hold themselves to account and to the highest standards of ethical patient care because the patients were their reason for being.

Stephen advised the audience that the College, along with the Australian Society of Ophthalmologists, because of patient safety, was launching legal action over the Optometry Board of Australia's unilateral decision to expand Optometry's scope of practice into glaucoma management. He said that the College firmly believed that the best way to uphold patient safety was to have the most qualified and experienced medical doctors to oversee the diagnosis, management and treatment of this most insidious disease.

He counselled the graduates that they would face many choices as they moved forward such as that they may move into research, join an existing practice, branch out on their own, pursue further study, or specialise in an area of interest, but that they would also face situations that would force them to decide what *type* of medical professional they wanted to be. He acknowledged that through the years of dedication and sacrifice, they had earned the right to work as professional individuals but he encouraged them to always work together both through the College and through their strong network of peers and he reminded them not to forget their roots. Stephen summed this up with the three Cs of competence, compassion, and collegiality!!

There was significant activity driven by the Board within the framework of the Strategic Plan during Stephen's second year as President, the major focus being Education and Training; Membership Services; Policy; International Development; and Communications and Publications.

- Education and Training, at the heart of the College's mission, was ably guided by the QEC in reviewing the policies and procedures that underpin the quality of the program, which relies on the collaborative efforts of Fellows in every aspect of the operation from curriculum review and examinations, to supervision and remediation of trainees in the workplace, and the accreditation of training posts;
- Continuing Professional Development, a requirement for medical registration, is extremely important to ensure that patients receive the highest quality of care. The way the College structured and implemented CPD was reviewed, and a cataract audit tool was developed by the team led by Dr Peter Macken;
- Policy activities called for submissions to Government and regulatory authorities to voice College opinions;
- International Development in Cambodia, Vietnam, Indonesia and the Pacific Islands entailed activities by Fellows in the implementation of curriculum, teaching and examination processes to ensure sustainable services;
- Communications and publications involved the College in promoting ophthalmology throughout the community by highlighting the important work all Fellows do;
- IT services were improved to provide quicker internet lines; a new file management system; and intranet to assist staff to better meet Fellows' needs;

- Other initiatives included the commencement of the second Leadership Development Program as part of RANZCO's charter to build the leadership and advocacy skills of Fellows; and the Code of Conduct was expanded to reflect the Australian Medical Board and the Medical Council of New Zealand regulations;
- The College, together with the Australian Society of Ophthalmologists, focused on Collaborative Integrated Team Care as the way forward with Optometry and other members of the eye health team.

In his second Presidential address, Stephen took the opportunity to open with a brief Maori greeting (mihi whakatau), to recognise the significance of biculturalism in New Zealand. Stephen again focused on Ethics, directing this to the graduates, and stressing the importance of recognising our privileged opportunity to treat patients from many backgrounds.

Additionally for this graduation ceremony Stephen showcased the new gown design with the black stripe to represent the NZ aspect of RANZCO, which is more than just green and gold! The current board agreed that this should be incorporated into all future new RANZCO gowns, and it would be possible to retrofit to previous gowns.

Stephen is married to Lucy, and they have a son, Alexander who is studying law, and a daughter, Henderson who is studying sociology and marketing at Otago University. In his spare time, Stephen keeps fit by running/jogging/swimming and regular road cycling. He enjoys time spent in the kitchen with good food and wine. During the second year of his presidency Stephen and Lucy were involved with the construction of a vacation home on Waiheke Is adjacent to Auckland.