

## President's Report 2016

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I would like to first of all thank everyone on the Board for their amazing contributions during 2016 – it has been a busy year, having achieved many of our goals and made some fabulous progress towards others. All of this has been done with a voluntary board, all of whom have much on their plates be it family, work, travel and health issues or all of these. So I thank you all.

### Looking back

When I look back on what was achieved last year I am immensely proud of the Board and the Society. However I cannot touch on these topics until I also mention how saddened I was during the year to learn of the passing of two of our very dear friends.

In May, whilst the Board was meeting in Sydney we learned of the terrible accident of Samuel Gibson. Sam was a well-loved member of our Society having attended a number of our conferences with his wife Jennifer and two lovely girls. My family and I had the pleasure of sitting on the table with Sam at our first conference in Sydney where he was dressed up as the Hobbit - our quiz results were certainly improved by having him there as was the level of laughter at the table. Sam was a true gentleman and great ambassador for OI across the world, never letting OI get in the way of life. He is sadly missed.

More recently I was advised of the unexpected passing of Peter Gallagher. Peter and Jean Gallagher were two of the founding members of the OI Society of NSW which then became the OI Society of Australia. Peter held a number of positions on the Board including Treasurer over the years. Whilst I never met Peter myself I have met many of his family and my heart goes out to Jean, Fiona and all of their family at this time.

### Website and On-line memberships and Donations

We have taken a great leap into the digital age by upgrading our website and ensuring that the information we have available is accessible by all. A vibrant website that is constantly changing to meet the needs of both our members and the public in terms of information about OI is a key element towards increasing awareness, which is one the Society's primary goals.

In addition to having the website updated we have been able to ensure that our memberships can now be paid on-line and with that we have a record in one place of all of our financial members. It also provides our members with automatic receipting which in turn reduces the administrative burden on our treasurer and membership officer.

Being a financial member has a clear value proposition. A financial member can access:

- Equipment grants
- Conference videos and presentations
- Member only areas of the website

- National OI Conference subsidies (in 2015 this was equivalent to over \$700 per person)

### **Board Strategy Session**

The board got together in May in Sydney for a weekend to connect and review the direction of the Society. We had a long discussion on the aims of the Society and whether they were still valid. It was agreed that they were still the 3 key aims.

1. Offer information and support to individuals and families affected by O.I.
2. Encourage and support research
3. Provide public and professional education and create awareness.

The focus and weight of each of these aims may change from time to time and it was agreed that one of the key focuses for the coming years is really about creating and increasing awareness of OI in the broader community.

At the meeting we put in place plans for the next conference, fundraising and sponsorship and reviewed governance practices. The weekend was very worthwhile and has set us up to deliver in 2016 and 2107.

### **Sponsorship Package Development**

Other activities that have taken place in 2016 include the development of an organisational sponsorship document and fundraising process. This could not be released until we had a strong website for potential sponsors to refer to. The document has been developed primarily for conference sponsorship and targets companies we interact with as a Society. A key objective of this sponsorship is to secure enough funds to ensure that we are able to be in a position to subsidise the future conference costs of attendees. Our target is to cover the full cost however there is a lot of competition for sponsorship dollars and the final level of subsidy will depend upon the level of support we can achieve.

We will also adapt this document for general OI Society sponsorship and grant applications.

### **Fundraising**

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank Mike Kendall and Janet Swift for their ongoing efforts in distributing, collecting and banking funds from our OI Tins in and around NSW. The money raised by these tins is regularly topping up our account balances and in addition to that it also helps raise awareness of OI in the community.

### **NDIS**

We have been actively engaged with the NDIA over the inclusion on OI in the NDIS. This is an ongoing process and we will continue to push to ensure that there is a greater understanding of OI within this process and that access to the NDIS is easily available to all.

### **Consolidation and Digitising**

Another project underway during 2016 has been the consolidation of records of the OI Society of Australia. Over the past 40 years there has been much collected and collated by the Society and these have been held in various homes of past board members. We have located all of the material and are working our way through this and consolidating what is needed and digitising all of our history, including photos, newsletters and other key documents. In doing this we will ensure that the history of the Society is retained and safe for the next 40 years.

So as I mentioned above much has been done by your Board in 2016 and it is with excitement that I look forward to seeing what we can achieve in 2017.

## Looking forward

2017 is shaping up to be a wonderful year of celebration for the OI Society of Australia. It will be 40 years since the formation of the Society. Originally the NSW Society but now very much a national Society with Board members from most states of Australia and members in all states of Australia.

The focus on the Board for 2017 will be to ensure that we look back on the 40 years and celebrate with all those that have been involved and continue to set the Society up to be sustainable for the next 40 years and beyond.

We will do this in a number of ways but primarily by having a fabulous 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference and making Wishbone Day a truly recognisable event on the Australian calendar, to ensure that the general public become aware of what OI is.

The key projects in 2017 will be:

- Membership Drive
- Support for Centres of Excellence in Australian hospitals and in particular the transition clinic at Westmead.
- The 2017 National Conference in Melbourne
- OI Awareness Public Relations Campaign
- Development of a sustainable income stream for the Society
- Reviewing and updating where necessary the Articles of Association of the OI Society of Australia

Thank you once again to our Board members and active members for their ongoing support and dedication in making this a great Society to be a part of.

I look forward to seeing how the Society grows and develops in 2017 and beyond.

**Fern Dyball**

President

OI Society of Australia

August 2016