

## New Zealand Institute of Chemistry

### President's Report 2005

Last year the NZIC Council gave considerable thought to the question of the present status of the Institute and its future role in the rapidly changing world of Chemical Science, as expounded in an article by the 2004 President, Andrew Brodie.<sup>1</sup> As a result of feedback from individuals and branches, the following actions have been taken by Council in 2005:

1. It was decided that there should be no change in the name of the Institute, but that we should find a short, snappy by-line reflecting the diversity of chemistry that we can use in all published material. A competition was held early this year to find such a by-line, and the winning entry "Supporting Chemical Sciences" was submitted by Kate McGrath of the Wellington Branch.
2. The organisation of Council was changed slightly to delegate more of the duties to individual council members. The role of each Council member has been defined in terms of a portfolio (specialist groups, prizes and fellowships, conferences, publications, web site, Chemical Education Trust, strategic planning, membership etc). In accordance with the recommendations made last year, Council held the first of its two meetings in February to enable strategic planning to be carried out early enough to be actioned during the term of President, and the Council Executive held a telephone conference approximately two months after each of the full council meetings.
3. It was decided that one of the most important challenges facing the Institute is the decline in membership that has occurred over the last several years. Considerable effort was put into recruitment of new members in 2005, with some degree of success in specific areas. As a result of this and other initiatives, the progressive decline in subscription income that has occurred over the last several years has been reversed in 2005. However, I believe that much more could be done to further increase membership, and I consider this to be still the most important challenge for the Institute over the next few years. There are a number of benefits of membership,<sup>1</sup> but overriding this should be the responsibility of chemical scientists to support their professional organisation in its endeavours to support chemical sciences and chemical scientists in New Zealand.

A major task that Council had to deal with in 2005 was the replacement of the Professional Secretariat and Managing Editor/ Publisher. These functions had been performed by ANCAT since 1998, but this year it became clear that ANCAT did not wish to continue its contract with us, and a staffing problem that arose within ANCAT early in the year created a greater degree of urgency to find a replacement. It was decided to advertise the Professional Secretariat and Managing Editor/Publisher positions separately to allow persons or organizations with an interest in only one of them to apply. The successful applicant for the Professional Secretariat is Richard Rendle (the current Honorary General Secretary). The successful applicant for the Managing Editor/Publisher position is a partnership between Rebecca Hurrell (the current Canterbury Branch Council Delegate) and Fiona Summerfield. Contracts for both positions were signed in June 2005. Although separate appointments were made

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<sup>1</sup> *Chemistry at the Crossroads: Does the NZIC have a Future?* in *Chemistry in New Zealand*, 2004, (3) 68, 6-10.

to the two positions, the appointees are all based in Christchurch, and two of them are NZIC members who are currently members of Council. Thus, the two areas of activity interact strongly with each other and with Council, and this has been particularly valuable during the transition period, and I expect it to continue to be a very effective working arrangement for the Institute. I would like to express my thanks to Richard, Rebecca and Fiona for the tremendous effort that they have put into making the transition as smooth as possible, and for the excellent results that they have already achieved.

One of the first tasks that we undertook under the new secretariat was a thorough analysis of the membership database. As of 9 November 2005 the database contains 1300 members, of which 836 are paid up (683) or non-subscription (153) members. We estimate that the potential number of non-lapsed members in the current list is about 950, and efforts are now being made to realize this number. This includes offering a new start for non financial members in 2005, in effect an amnesty on memberships in arrears.

As a consequence of the staffing problem at ANCAT earlier in the year, and the inevitable steep leaning curve that followed the transition to the new Secretariat, there was a considerable degree of uncertainty concerning the state of the Institute's finances for most of 2005. As a consequence, the branch grants for 2005 were rather less than might normally be expected. The final audited accounts for 2004, which only became available to Council in November 2005, showed that our financial position is rather better than expected, and Council expects to be able to make more generous branch grants in 2006. However, the financial situation in 2006 is still expected to be quite tight. It will therefore be necessary to continue the practice that we have adopted over the last few years of taking the financial assets of branches into consideration when allocating branch grants, as a number of branches continue to hold considerable financial assets.

Other matters are reported on in the rest of the report below.

#### *Election of Fellows*

At the September meeting of Council the following members were elected to the Fellowship of the Institute:

Associate Professor R.F. Anderson, University of Auckland  
Dr. B.R. Copp, University of Auckland  
Associate Professor A.J. Eastal, University of Auckland  
Mr. Neil Edmonds, University of Auckland  
Associate Professor G. Hedwig, Massey University, Palmerston North  
Associate Professor H. Idriss, University of Auckland  
Associate Professor H.G. Kjaergaard, University of Otago  
Dr. A.W. Limmer, Stonecroft Wines, Mere Road, Hastings  
Associate Professor L. Main, University of Waikato  
Dr. G.M. Miskelly, University of Auckland  
Associate Professor C.M. Taylor, Massey University, Palmerston North

### *Honorary Fellowship*

Council unanimously approved the election of Emeritus Professor Brian Halton to Honorary Fellowship on the occasion of his retirement from Victoria University of Wellington.

### *Award of Prizes*

Council approved the award of the following Institute prizes for 2005.

Easterfield Award: Associate Professor Emily J. Parker FNZIC, Massey University  
HortResearch Prize for Excellence in Chemical Sciences: Professor Margaret A. Brimble FNZIC, University of Auckland  
Nurfarm Prize for Excellence in Industrial and Applied Chemistry: Dr Selwyn C. Yorke FNZIC, New Zealand Pharmaceuticals Ltd, Palmerston North  
NZIC Chemical Education Prize: Associate Professor Trevor M. Kitson, Massey University

### *NZIC Representation*

This year the following appointments have been made/continued:

Pacifichem Organising Committee: Professor Rob Smith FNZIC (Otago)

### IUPAC:

Union Advisory Committee: Professor Kip Powell FNZIC (Canterbury)

National Contacts:

Div. II (Inorganic): Assoc. Professor Lyall Hanton FNZIC

Div. III (Organic & Biomolecular): Assoc. Professor Carol Taylor

Div. VII (Clinical & Human Health): Dr Paul Fawcett

Other NZIC representatives are:

Div. I (Physical & Biophysical): Associate Professor Jim McQuillan

Div. IV (Macromolecular): Dr Greg Russell

Div. V (Analytical): Professor Kip Powell FNZIC

Div. VI (Chemistry of the Environment): Dr Pat Holland FNZIC

Div. VIII (Chem. Nomenclature & Struct. Representation): Dr Richard Hartshorn

Asia-Pacific Association of Catalysis Societies (APACS):

Associate Professor Hicham Idriss

### Royal Society of NZ Council

Professor Andrew Brodie FNZIC (representing the NZIC and the NZIP)

### *Chemical Education Trust*

The 2005 distribution from the Chemical Education Trust is still being finalized. Leon Phillips steps down as a Trustee this year and I thank him for the many years he has served the Institute in this way. Dr Pat Holland and Dr. Alistair MacGibbon continue as Trustees and Professor Andrew Brodie joins them next year.

### *Specialist Groups*

The level of activity of the NZIC Specialist Groups continues to be very variable between the groups. Some groups are not active whereas others, such as the

'Inorganic and Organometallic' and 'Fats and Oils' are. The role of some groups is simply to provide a contact person to link with activities of the Royal Australian Chemical Institute (RACI) divisions. Dr Suzanne Boniface has initiated a reactivation of the Chemical Education Group, and branch representatives have been appointed to this group to assist in arranging activities, etc.

#### *Visit of the President to Branches*

I visited all branches in the period May-July and delivered a scientific address, *Shedding Light on Molecular Structure: Applications of Spectroscopy in Structural and Materials Chemistry*. I also held a discussion on NZIC affairs and possible responses of the NZIC to the draft report on the *Future of Chemistry Project* that had been released in March by the RACI. Meetings were all held at universities (apart from the Manawatu meeting, which was held at the University College of Learning Restaurant). I thank all the branches for their excellent hospitality during my visits.

Prizes were presented at these visits to:

Dr Suzanne Boniface (Wellington) – Chemical Education

Dr G.B. Evans and Dr R.H. Furneaux (Wellington) - Nurfarm Prize

Paul Lu (Waikato) – J.E. Allan Memorial Prize of the Waikato Branch

#### *Representation at Meetings*

I represented/will represent the Institute at three meetings during the year:

1. *The Halton Retirement Symposium; Novel Molecules, New Materials, and Small Rings, Victoria University of Wellington, 29-30 June 2005*. This symposium was held in honour of Emeritus Professor Brian Halton to mark his retirement from Victoria University of Wellington. Following the opening ceremony it was my pleasure and honour to be able to speak about Brian's long and distinguished service to the NZIC, and to present him with the certificate for the Honorary Fellowship to which he was elected this year.

2. *The 13<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of Federation of Asian Chemical Societies (FACS) and the 11<sup>th</sup> Asian Chemical Congress (11ACC), Seoul, 24-26 August 2005*. The Asian Chemical Congress is a biennial meeting organized by the Federation of Asian Chemical Societies, which currently consists of 22 national chemical societies in the Asian region, including the New Zealand Institute of Chemistry. I was invited to attend the 13<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of FACS and the 11ACC congress at the Korea University in Seoul as the National Representative of the New Zealand Institute of Chemistry. The sub-title of the congress was "For the Quantum Leap of Asian Chemistry", and this quantum leap was very evident in many aspects of the meeting. For example, there were about 1300 participants, a substantial increase over the 250 participants at the 10th congress in Hanoi in 2003. The program covered a wide range of topics in fundamental and applied chemistry, and the plenary lecturers included three Nobel laureates. It was clear that the Asian Chemical Societies are keen to increase the standing of the ACC meetings to something comparable to an ACS meeting, and to make the FACS the "third axis" of world chemistry, alongside the American and European societies. The meeting was attended by representatives of the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry, the American Chemical Society and the Royal Society of Chemistry, and by a representative of the European counterpart of FACS, formerly called the Federation of European Chemical Societies (FECS), but recently renamed EuChemS. The 2007 meeting will be in Malaysia

(Kuala Lumpur), and the 2009 meeting will be in China (Shanghai). The organizers of the ACC made it very clear that they are keen to see more involvement of New Zealanders in the meetings.

3. *Pacificchem 2005, Honolulu, Hawaii, 15-20 Dec. 2005*. The International Chemical Congress of Pacific Basin Societies is held every five years “to disseminate recent research results in the chemical sciences among chemists of the Pacific Rim countries, thereby fostering industrial development, improving local and global environments and the material well-being of their peoples”. The NZIC is one of the member societies, and I will represent the Institute at this Congress as one of my last duties for the year as President.

#### *Future NZIC Conferences*

Planning is underway for two NZIC-sponsored conferences:

1. *NZIC National Conference, Rotorua, 2-6 December 2006*. This conference is being organized by a committee chaired by Prof. Peter Schwerdtfeger (Auckland Branch), and planning is well advanced. A preliminary notice has been placed on the NZIC web site, and will appear in the December issue of *Chemistry in New Zealand*.
2. *RACI/NZIC/NZASE Chemical Education Conference, Auckland, July 2007*. This international conference is being organized by the RACI, NZIC and NZASE (NZ Association of Science Educators). The Chair of the local organizing committee will be Dr. David Salter (Auckland Branch). This meeting should provide an excellent focus point for the NZIC Chemical Education Specialist Group chaired by Dr. Suzanne Boniface (Wellington Branch).

#### *Editorials*

At the editors' requests, I wrote editorials for *Chemistry in New Zealand* and *CHEM NZ*. I also wrote a news item for *RSC News* about the NZIC/RSC-sponsored lecture tour of New Zealand by Professor Bob Grubbs, one of the three winners of the 2005 Nobel Prize in Chemistry.

#### *RACI Survey Response*

During 2004 the RACI carried out a study on the future of chemistry in Australia. This study was initiated to gather information on the state of chemistry in Australia and, especially, to explore the anecdotal view that in Australia there is a ‘disconnect’ between the strengthening demand for quality graduate chemists and a decline in numbers and their quality. It achieved this through a desktop review of the Australian secondary school sector, collating information from a university survey of Chemistry Heads and also a university student questionnaire, as well as analysing data collected from people employing chemists (employer survey) designed by the RACI. Information from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Graduate Careers Council of Australia and the RACI database was analysed. Where applicable, international benchmarks were used and discussed. Following the release of the Future of Chemistry Interim Report in March 2005, feedback was invited and incorporated into the Future of Chemistry Final Report. The NZIC was invited to submit feedback on the interim report, and I submitted a response on behalf of the NZIC following discussion of aspects of the report at the NZIC branches during my presidential address tour. The final report can be viewed on the RACI web site, and I recommend it as worthwhile reading for all NZIC members.

#### *Concluding Comments*

Finally I would like to thank Council for their work and support for the NZIC during the year. In particular I thank Colin Freeman (Treasurer) and Richard Rendle (Honorary General Secretary) who have given generously of their time and have done a magnificent job in managing the changeover to the new Secretariat.

My thanks go to Brian Halton for continuing to edit *Chemistry in New Zealand* to a high standard, and for providing invaluable assistance to the new Managing Editor/Publisher in the transition period. Thanks also to the Canterbury-based *CHEM NZ* editorial team for their ongoing work on this popular education publication, and to Rebecca Hurrell for updating the NZIC web page.

I would also thank all members of the Institute for their continued support. If you are not actively involved in the affairs of the NZIC I please consider becoming more involved, for example as a branch committee member. As Brian Halton said at his retirement symposium in response to my comments about his long involvement with the Institute “whatever effort you put in will be rewarded one-hundredfold”. This is the kind of attitude that will guarantee the future of the Institute, which depends much more on the support and enthusiasm of its members than on the actions of its President or Council!

Graham Bowmaker FNZIC  
*President*  
15 November 2005