



PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT 2013-2014

It is my pleasure to present the President's Report to the 2014 Annual General Meeting.

The Society has been busy over the last 12 months – cementing relationships with international organisations, developing and refining a draft standards document for aeromedical services, and making representations to Federal Government on proposed changes to our industry. In fact there is a lot about to happen in our industry, and while these changes are generally supported, the uncharacteristic speed at which the regulator is working, I feel is of concern.

The Society has made important progress on the development of a document detailing standards for aeromedical services. My sincere thanks to David Waters for the enormous effort he has put into developing a draft document for consultation. The document covers key service areas such as capability, operations, equipment, communications and helipads. I must also thank those organisations and individuals who have provided feedback, particularly those who attended a discussion session in Sydney on 8 August 2014. It was fantastic to welcome the 14 people who attended the meeting, and I am most grateful to those organisations who arranged for a representative to attend the discussion.

Since that meeting, a further draft has been compiled and is available on the Society's website. I commend the document to you and welcome any comments or feedback you may have on the latest document.

We continue to make important progress in building stronger international relationships and I would like to extend a warm welcome to all our international guests attending this year's Conference.

The Society's annual scholarship was awarded to Margaret Tabone from the NSW Air Ambulance Service. Margaret used her Scholarship to attend the Air Med Conference in Rome during May. Margaret will present an overview of her scholarship during the Brisbane Conference.

The Scholarship is awarded to members of the Society to assist their professional development and, through reporting back to members, provides benefits to others in the Society.

The Scholarship of up to \$A3,000 can be used to attend a relevant international conference or undertake a professional development programme within the region. Further, the successful candidate may be able to take advantage of our reciprocal relationships with our Accord partners, and attend their respective conferences free of charge.

The Society's annual conference was held in Melbourne last year. The theme, "Air Support_ the vital link" I feel really reflects the reality of our work – we do provide a crucial service to patients, particularly in rural and remote areas. I would like to congratulate the conference organising team on the programme they put together. It is not an easy task to organise a conference when done alongside full time jobs.

Unfortunately sometimes however, providing that vital link does come at a tragic cost. To recognise his contribution to the industry, the Society will honour Michael Wilson by way of an Oration at this year's conference. Mick was a NSW Ambulance Service helicopter paramedic who was killed whilst undertaking a winch mission on Christmas Eve, 2011. The inaugural Oration will be given by colleague Cameron Edgar.

However, tragedy strikes more often in the United States. Since 1980, well over 300 pilots, nurses, paramedics and patients have died in HEMS accidents. As Randy Mains notes in his book, "Journey to the Golden Hour" "...it was an unfortunate and tragic by-product that..... along with the promise of saving lives.....that paradoxically, pilots and the medical flight crew....would face the outrageous odds of a forty percent chance of dying if they flew in an aeromedical helicopterwe would face an apathetic FAA, disinterested NTSB, greedy hospital administrators and penny pinching helicopter companies who would supply the hospitals with helicopters and flight crews..."

The Society continually debates whether or not to invite overseas speakers to give keynote addresses, given our own pool of talented people. But I feel sometimes we need to hear from "outsiders" not to tell us how well they do things, but to remind us how well **we** perform. And how important it is not to become complacent.

We have a lot to be proud of. Our isolation from the rest of the world and at times ourselves, has meant we have had to be self sufficient and reliable, as there is usually no one "just around the corner" to back us up.

Those who have gone before us have worked hard to ensure that we do provide a vital link that is

Responsive
Patient focused and
Safe

It has, and continues to be, not always easy to maintain the high standard. Some of the proposed themes for the Melbourne conference surrounded budgets and “doing more with less”. It is an issue we all face daily - people making decisions on our future who don't quite understand what we do, or the risks associated with our work, or comprehend the consequences if we don't get it right. But maybe, in part, this is our fault, in not developing closer relationships with those who do make decisions about our future.

We always need to look back and be proud of our heritage, particularly in an era of cost consciousness.

Over the decades there have been many, many stories of lives saved, of families reunited despite the odds, despite the isolation and despite the high acuity patients we see. Thanks to our industry and the people working in it there are indeed, countless stories of happy endings.

In looking forward, we need to build on the very solid foundations and vigorously resist the temptation to cut back to save a few dollars, as those stories, invariably, do not have happy endings.

Planning for this year's programme in Brisbane, Queensland has been underway for over 12 months and will mark the first time ASA and ASAM have come together to host a Conference. I trust the Conference will be an enormous success.

My sincere thanks to the members of the ASA Committee for their valuable contributions to the Society over the past year:

David Waters, Vice President, New Zealand
Geri Malone, Secretary, South Australia
Chris Webber, Treasurer, New South Wales
Andrew Berry, New South Wales
Mark Buick, New South Wales
Sally Edmonds, Western Australia
Di Fuller, New Zealand
Paul Gallagher, New South Wales
Ben Stanton, South Australia
Margaret Tabone, New South Wales

As always, Kate Smith's work has been crucial to the success of the Society. Her organisational skills in putting together our annual conference and her input into the Society generally are very much appreciated.

I particularly want to record my appreciation of Geri Malone and Chris Webber for their continued contributions to the Society. Both Geri and Chris have diligently performed their roles as Secretary and Treasurer respectively. Thank you to you both for your hard work over many years. Your diligence has certainly made my role a lot easier.

I would also like to thank Catherine Jones for her administrative support over the last 12 months.

In conclusion, I would like to extend my best wishes to the incoming Committee. I have very much enjoyed serving as your President for the last two years and I am sure that the new Executive and Committee will work together to continue to move the Society forward in what appears to be a very busy year ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Graeme Field', written in a cursive style.

Graeme Field
PRESIDENT

11 September 2014
Brisbane, Queensland.