

4th World Congress of Asian Psychiatry (WCAP)

A key priority during my term as President was developing and strengthening links between the RANZCP and international organisations, especially in the Asia Pacific region. In line with this I was pleased to be invited to, and present at, the recent World Congress of Asian Psychiatry (WCAP) in Bangkok. The current President Dr Murray Patton and RANZCP CEO Mr Andrew Peters also attended and reinforced the ongoing commitment of the RANZCP to the region.

The 4th WCAP of the Asian Federation of Psychiatric Associations (AFPA) was held in Bangkok and hosted by the Psychiatry Association of Thailand (PAT), their Department of Mental Health, The Society for Geriatric Psychiatry and Neuropsychiatry and the Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Society of Thailand. It was a great success and brought together over 1,200 attendees from 43 countries.

It is gratifying that the College is now recognised as a key organisation within the Asia Pacific region and organisations and associations with the region are increasingly including the RANZCP in their activities. This is a result of much hard work over a number of years by the Office of the President and CEO, the previous GC and the current Board, the International Affairs Working Group and the ongoing work on individual Fellows that have close links with the region.

Our 2012-2014 Strategic Plan clearly highlights the importance of engagement internationally, by stating “*Continue to develop links and leadership with international organisations and colleagues in South East Asia and the Asia Pacific region’ in the College’s*”. The Inaugural Asia Pacific Forum at this years’ RANZCP Congress in Sydney brought together representatives from 15 nations and it was a great pleasure to meet many of these people again and continue our conversations in Thailand.

A key activity of AFPA in the last few years has been to strengthen the governance of the organisation and I am pleased the RANZCP has been able to contribute to this process. A Board Meeting of AFPA was held in Bangkok attended by 16 Presidents of national psychiatric organisations and 15 other psychiatrists who have contributed significantly in Asia. The outgoing President Professor Shinfuku of Japan stressed the key principles of governance, transparency, and inclusion of all Asian leadership in decision making. A new Constitution is being finalised and a new organisational structure has been developed consisting of an Executive Committee, a Board, the AFPA Council and an Expert Panel.

There was resounding support for the new direction of AFPA as a pathway to unify Asian psychiatry, enormous goodwill and determination to work collaboratively and for the benefit of mental health in the region. I would like to welcome Dr Pichet from Thailand as the incoming President of AFPA. I am confident he will move the organisation in a positive direction.

Both the current President and I have commenced roles in AFPA. Murray Patton sits on the AFPA Board along with other Presidents of national psychiatric organisations, and I am a member of the AFPA Council which consists of 6 international members who can advise and assist the Board and Executive.

The 5th World Congress of Asian Psychiatry will be held in Fukuoka, Japan 3-6 March 2015 and I would encourage College members to attend. There will also be a smaller regional meeting in Johor Bharu, Malaysia 16-19 April 2014.

I certainly look forward to continuing to work with the College as we increase and strengthen our partnerships within the Asia Pacific region.

Dr Maria Tomasic
Immediate Past President, RANZCP.