

## **2017 President's report for Australasian Association of Academic Primary Care**

Successful organisations need to evolve to match the demands of an ever-changing "outer world". The Australasian Association of Academic Primary Care has, in the last few years, faced a few demands from that world.

In a few years we have transitioned from being a body focussed solely on Australian general practice to one with an additional New Zealand focus, and a remit that extends to primary health care as a whole. The result is a richer organisation.

Yet our recent demands have been more complex, since the state of academic primary care in Australia and New Zealand is far more fragile than it was only a few years ago.

National research funding organisations continue to allocate barely 1% of their total allocations towards PHC specific projects, and have not provided PHC directed career support for some time. In Australia we have seen the dismantling of the academic infrastructure of PHC through the closure of PHCRIS, APHCRI, the defunding of AAAPC's APHCRen (the Australian Primary Care Research Network), and the withdrawal of support for BEACH, the world's largest nationally representative longitudinal study of general practice. New Zealand continues to provide minimal support for academic primary care.

Even good news has been compromised. The byzantine processes used by Australia's RACGP in its recent PBRN grant oriented towards enrolment in primary care have acted to disenfranchise a number of our members.

Through all of this AAAPC has been in the vanguard putting the case for a vibrant academic PHC community. Our Executive have resolved that we need to become more nimble, more secure and more able to support the primary care academic community.

So after our first member survey, and our first all day planning meeting we bring to the 2017 AGM a strategic plan for AAAPC. Part of the plan involves a reshaping of the objectives of the organisation, and a securing of AAAPC's role in promoting an evidence based primary care oriented health system. Over the last 2 years we have helped shape some of the detail of the Medical Research Future Fund, built relationships with important parts of the Federal Government, and formalised links with several professional Colleges. As an organisation we have had major input into the PHCRIS conference, and have had increasing representation within the North American Primary Care Research Group.

With this meeting I am stepping down after 2 years as AAAPC President. It has been an enormous privilege. While on my watch we have taken some major hits to the infrastructure of academic primary care, we have developed mechanisms for making AAAPC more sustainable, responsive to external challenges, and better able to foster our primary care academic workforce. We are seeing more and more influence from our New Zealand leaders and are slowly beginning our transition from a general practice organisation to one that can embrace primary care. Perhaps the most encouraging thing for me has been the increased visibility of young academics in our organisation – Lauralie Richard, Lindsey Brown and others like them are getting ready to lead our disciplines into their next stage.

I am convinced that AAAPC has a critical role in optimising evidence based primary care in our nations. Just like primary care, AAAPC's biggest threat is a perceived lack of perception of influence, and, what Martin Bass called "a sense of learned helplessness." Our membership should demand that AAAPC's leadership shepherds the academic primary care community to a more secure future. The foundations are in place.

Special thanks to those members of the Executive who contributed to the Strategic planning process – especially the travellers from New Zealand (Sue Pollen, Tim Stokes and Lauralie Richard), Canberra (Kirsty Douglas), Townsville (Sarah Larkins) Newcastle (Dimitry Pond) and Adelaide (Lindsay Brown and Richard Reed). All have been wonderful contributors to AAAPC through the year, as have Phyllis Lau (our Treasurer), Nick Zwar (past President) and others on the Executive. Brooke Vandenberg (my Research Administrator) has given a great deal of help behind the scenes, especially in the formulation of the Strategic Plan. I wanted to particularly acknowledge the energy within those from PHCRIS at Flinders University who have tirelessly worked to ensure that the 2017 PHCRIS conference becomes a reality.

And finally, I wanted to acknowledge the passion, energy and enthusiasm that Kitty Novy brings to her role as the heartbeat of this organisation. We could not do without her.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Grant Russell', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr Grant Russell

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AAAPC President 2015-2017