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From the President

RACI
REPORTER

The RACI: networking, comradeship and loyalty

The Assembly of the RACI met in Melbourne on 21 and 22 May. The Assembly is attended by the Branch presidents, the divisional chairs and the Board under the President's chairmanship. There are also usually a number of observers present; for example, the State coordinators and the Chair of the International Relations Committee attended this Assembly. The major change in the governance of your Institute over the last five years has been the introduction of a Board of Management. This Board has assumed much of the general business of the Institute. All in the Institute have moved much more to an electronic mode of operation and we are able to handle much more of the decision-making outside of either Board or Assembly session. This means that Assembly now has much more of its time available to consider strategic issues that confront chemistry, chemists and the RACI.

A major strategic issue that we considered was the Future of Chemistry Project, our key activity at the moment, about which much has been and will continue to be reported. The three clear messages to me from the project are that there are great opportunities for chemists in Australia as we go forward, that the RACI needs to develop much better interaction with the secondary school level of teaching and that the role for the RACI is to present a coherent voice to government, industry and the community on the path forward.

I very much enjoyed the next session of the Assembly, which was led by David Lewis, Chair of the Polymer Division, where the group discussed why we were members of the RACI and what additional things we would like to see in the future. The three main and high-level reasons agreed on for being in the RACI were networking, comradeship and loyalty. These are linked in my mind and represent three levels of growth of membership benefits. Networking is valuable: it means knowing who to ring to ask a question and who is likely to answer that question in the best way. The value varies

over time – critical when you are looking for the next step in your career, for example. Comradeship also develops over time, usually in my mind as a result of a shared working experience – defining a project (often during a more social setting) and then gathering the resources to undertake the project and later celebrating the success of the initiative. Loyalty is the end result. Direct engagement with the RACI will necessarily vary as the demands of personal, professional and social life vary. I am very proud of the number of members we have in their 80s and 90s who perhaps don't attend as many events as they once did but are still members of our Institute. It has been estimated that around 20% of our members are active. I suggest that this is a snapshot and that if we could count the members who were active at some time in the Institute the percentage number would be much higher. This 'churn' of active participation in events, committees and the like is a very healthy sign.

What other benefits would we like to see for our members? Again at a high level we identified ongoing professional development activities as becoming increasingly important. The RACI undertakes much activity that contributes to professional development; however, the Assembly felt that there was an opportunity for a more structured approach to this, particularly with the changing nature of our industry.

We would also like to see the RACI as more influential in informing public policy in Australia. I feel we are moving into a period of change for the innovation sector in particular – it will be a real challenge to develop policy guidelines that reflect the role chemistry and chemists can play in Australia's future. Our relationship with FASTS is very important here and we will continue to grow that linkage.

The RACI is an organisation of much activity and many volunteers – our Branches, Divisions, Sections and Groups do a fantastic job. The May 2005 Assembly of the RACI was a celebration of our recent successes and a recognition that much remains to be done. It was a pleasure to attend!

Membership benefits: who to contact

Members seeking the financial benefits should contact the respective organisation, quoting their RACI membership number.

Professional indemnity insurance

Spencer Thomas and Partners P/L (03) 9730 2266

Retirement advice

RetireInvest 1800 635 793

Hire car discounts

Hertz Rent-a-car 13 30 39 (CDP No. 1340920)