

From the Chief Executive Officer

In this issue of O&G we celebrate the women we care for in our Indigenous and Pacific communities. Although these communities are featured together in this issue of O&G, there is no assumption that they represent a homogeneous group. Rather we recognise that they form a diverse range of cultures and communities across a vast geography of ocean and islands. The editors of O&G have therefore endeavoured to present a balanced perspective of women's health activities in these areas, drawing on the experiences and views of Indigenous Australian, Indigenous New Zealand, Pacific Island and Papua New Guinean women, and obstetricians and gynaecologists who work with them.

I have been moved and impressed by the articles and interviews offered by our contributors. They paint a picture of special needs, and meaningful responses provided by individuals to meet those needs. Particularly, the articles authored by Indigenous and Islander healthcare workers remind us of the differences in culture and context that must be considered in designing and participating in healthcare programs.

The College, through the contribution of individual members, has a tradition of working to improve the health care of both Indigenous women in our two countries and women who live or reside in the islands that surround us. The College has much to offer in specialist knowledge and expertise in partnership with regional health service providers. We know only too well that the key to programs that provide optimal assistance and support is to ensure that they are culturally appropriate. This means that programs need to be devised and developed in collaboration with local health professionals and where possible, form partnerships and offer personnel resources to project providers. We need to listen every bit as much as we speak; and to develop the insight to understand the situation as experienced by the people who live there. Additionally, in the Pacific and Papua New Guinea we need to actively support the Fiji School of Medicine (FSM) and University of Papua New Guinea

(UPNG) teaching programs and be cognisant of the scarce health care resources available.

This is where you as an individual might be able to help. There is a pressing need for specialist obstetricians and gynaecologists to work with, and teach, and learn from the local staff. I'm especially encouraging senior registrars and new Fellows to spend six months or more learning and serving in a metropolitan or remote Indigenous community or at the FSM or UPNG. The levels of financial support are variable, but your learning and experiences will be unique. You will amass a wealth of understanding and skill that you will be able to draw on throughout your career, form a network of new relationships, and experience the satisfaction of contributing significantly to healthcare in Indigenous communities and the islands that surround us.

A group of Fellows and staff of the College are currently developing a resource package to assist volunteers teaching at FSM and UPNG. Volunteers may be called on to perform a range of procedures, advise on management of cases, and teach registrars in the hospitals. In the resource package, you will find example lectures in the obstetric and gynaecological topics most needed and guidance to help you in your teaching role.

Three senior staff members of the College have agreed to act as contact

persons to provide you with further information about the positions currently available and link you to service providers.

The articles that follow in this issue of *O&G* highlight the issues and outline the need. They inspire and stimulate, and set a challenge that's yours to consider.

Eleanor Long
Chief Executive Officer

Volunteers Sought for Work with Indigenous and Islander Communities

For further information about how you may be able to volunteer your skills and expertise in Indigenous or Pacific Islander women's health care, contact the following members at the College:

Ann Robertson (Australian Indigenous women), tel +61 3 9412 2939, email arobertson@ranzcog.edu.au

Steve Williams (New Zealand Indigenous women), tel +64 4 915 1901, email s.williams@ranzcog.org.nz

Carmel Walker (Asian and Pacific Island women), tel +61 3 9412 2926, email cwalker@ranzcog.edu.au