

50th Anniversary Speech at Government House

Professor and Mrs de Kretser, Honorary Life Members, Guests and Colleagues
In May 1957, Keith Harrison in Sydney and Bryan Hudson in Melbourne proposed an association of physicians interested in diabetes and metabolism. By October of that year, a committee was set up to explore the formation of a society for the study of diabetes and endocrinology, and a programme was planned for a scientific meeting. A draft constitution was formulated and, in February 1958, all those interested in the formation of an Endocrine Society were invited to a meeting in Sydney in June. Sixty-nine people attended this first meeting, and these and a further 30 interested people became the foundation members of ESA.

Fast forward to today and ESA has over 900 members, runs 3 highly successful scientific and clinical meetings, provides higher degree students and postdoctoral fellows with financial support, and makes 3 junior investigator awards and 3 international travel awards. We are involved in clinician training, and providing advice and input to Government and professional bodies on endocrine matters.

Our members have made internationally significant scientific and clinical discoveries and we count among our members a State Governor, a University Vice-chancellor, RACP Presidents, Faculty of Medicine deans, Institute heads, and Fellows of the Australian Academy of Science. Sometimes we are too modest in acknowledging our achievements but I think we all agree that our founders would be justifiably proud of what their Society has become.

It wasn't always easy. Early councils had to grapple with heady issues such as whether Council members should be paid first-class airfares. This was changed to economy in 1965 and ceased completely sometime later.

Although scientific methodologies were rudimentary in the early days, it is fascinating to see the creativity with which clinical questions were addressed and the extent to which understanding endocrine physiology underpinned the development of indirect measures of hormone action. Typed proceedings of the early meetings included transcripts of talks together with the subsequent discussions, so it is obvious that ESA has always been blessed with passionate and outspoken, if not occasionally headstrong, members.

Of course, anniversaries such as this are not just about the past and ESA's commitment to supporting our junior members is manifest in our fellowships, awards and grants. We are celebrating four of our Rising Stars in a symposium on Wednesday afternoon and the difficulty in choosing the speakers is a tribute to the quality of our younger researchers. We could easily have filled several more symposia.

In conclusion, I'd like to thank Professor and Mrs de Kretser for hosting this celebration in such a spectacular location. I'd also like to thank my fellow Councillors and all of the ESA members who made suggestions regarding our Anniversary celebrations.

In particular, I'd like to thank David Phillips who has worked tirelessly to organise tonight and all other aspects of our celebrations. No task was too difficult or too petty for him and I sincerely appreciate his outstanding contribution.

I hope that this week will remind all of us to be proud of the strength of endocrinology in Australia.

Professor Leon Bach