

The electronic version of *Australian Prescriber* is an important way of providing independent information to an international audience. In 2002 the website was accredited by the international Health On the Net Foundation for the quality of the information in *Australian Prescriber*.

The international role of the journal was further underlined when it was chosen to produce a publication for the World Health Organization. The proceedings of the International Conference on National Medicinal Drug Policies, held in Australia, were published as a supplement to *Australian Prescriber* in 1997.¹¹

Despite the success of the journal and other QUM initiatives, funding for pharmaceutical education was reduced in 1996. A review was announced to look at 'the future role (if any) for the *Australian Prescriber*'.

The review consisted of market research and also a nationwide consultation by Dr Andrew Herxheimer. When Dr Herxheimer reported in 1997 he found that *Australian Prescriber's* resources were 'tiny and precarious' and had been 'whittled away over the years'. As the staff had by now been reduced to two there was a danger that '*Australian Prescriber* would collapse'. Dr Herxheimer found that there was a need for an independent Australian drug bulletin and that *Australian Prescriber* should be published more, not less, frequently. The report was accepted and by 1999 sufficient funds were available to allow *Australian Prescriber* to be published six times a year.

Despite this reprieve the Department of Health and Aged Care, as it was then called, decided in 2000 that it would no longer be the publisher of *Australian Prescriber*. There then followed almost a year of uncertainty which led the Executive Editorial Board to once again fear for the journal's existence.¹² After some difficult negotiations, the journal became part of the National Prescribing Service (NPS) in 2002.

Once the initial anxieties were overcome, the journal settled well into the NPS. There are many opportunities for *Australian Prescriber* to assist the NPS to promote the quality

use of medicines, while continuing its tradition of editorial independence. The continued funding of *Australian Prescriber*, as an integral part of the NPS, in the Federal budget of 2005 confirms the success of the partnership and augurs well for the future.

Australian Prescriber would not have survived for three decades without the hard work and goodwill of many people involved in its production. Ultimately, however, a journal will only survive if people read it. The fact that *Australian Prescriber* has the widest readership of any Australian medical publication suggests that the journal is giving health professionals the information they need. If this helps to improve the care of patients then *Australian Prescriber* will celebrate many more anniversaries.

References

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Reflections from a past editor

Editor, – Congratulations on reaching this distinguished milestone. It raises many memories for me – mostly fond. In my time as Editor I was critically dependent on the highly professional input to the journal from the Executive Editorial Board (EEB). Without their input the journal would have 'gone under' at the first of the several hurdles you discuss. As a public servant the journal brought me into contact with many colleagues across Australia and opened new contacts overseas. This should not be underestimated in what could have been an isolated existence in the 'wastes of Canberra'.

The first major hurdle, possible extinction, was an opportunity to prove the value of the journal. While lobbying to maintain the journal went on, in parallel, the EEB was holding 'clandestine' meetings to ensure continued publication. I well recall one such meeting at Sydney University which, at the time, reviewed material for what seemed to be the last issue. Volume 6 Issue 2 of 1982 marked the expected demise of the journal, however, thanks to all the lobbying, the journal was restored in 1983.

I now look forward to the 40th and 50th anniversary celebrations.

Rod Hall

Editor, *Australian Prescriber*, 1980–88