

## The Australasian Orthodontic Board – 15 Years Old!

### *Contemporary Origins of the Australasian Orthodontic Board*

There were many early references in the Australasian Society of Orthodontists (ASO) to consideration of a Specialty Board process. Surprisingly none ever came to fruition. The current Australasian Orthodontic Board originated from ASO Education Committee meetings as early as 1989. The original shape and form of the AOB was to be something similar to the American Board of Orthodontics. However, as the AOB process developed the structure progressively changed to the entity we are all familiar with today.

The real impetus to the formation of the Board came from Professor Terry Freer as Chairman of the ASO Education Committee. The following quote from Professor Freer gives some insight, "I could foresee the continuing education "train" coming down the track and the objective was to maintain control of our own professional destiny." Professor Freer and the Education Committee put together a working paper on the formation of the AOB in preparation for a resolution to the full ASO membership. The AOB would be a Committee of the ASO, Inc. with objectives that were similar to those put forward in the 1964 discussions of the formation of an Australian Orthodontic Board by early AOB advocates R. Y. Norton and J. F. Reading. Professor Freer and the Education Committee presented the following objectives: 1) To stimulate and promote the spirit of self improvement and research among the students and practitioners of orthodontics, 2) To encourage and promote the continual review and elevation of standards of orthodontic education and treatment, 3) To conduct examinations for the purposes of evaluating the qualifications and skills of practicing orthodontists and conferring certificates upon those who meet the established standards of the board, 4) Promote, display and publication of the case records, and 5) Encourage the dental schools in Australia to liaise on undergraduate and post graduate educational objectives in orthodontics and sponsor consultation between university teachers on a regular basis under the auspices of the ASO or the proposed board.

The actual make up of the AOB Committee was different than exists today but the objectives remain much the same.

Professor Freer stressed the following: “the ASO should avoid confrontation with other educational institutions. Our main objective should be educational standards for their own sake. It will be a welcome consequence if we can gain a higher level of co-operative consultation within our educational establishment at the same time. The ASO is a strong forward thinking society and through the establishment of the AOB, it will have a body with the necessary expertise to influence educational standards within and outside our society.”

The working paper developed by the enlisted AOB working committee was presented to the 1990 ASO Representatives and Council meeting at which time more details of the process were requested prior to Council making a final decision. However a resolution was passed that a further discussion paper be prepared on the purpose and implementation of the AOB and a questionnaire was to be sent to the membership on the concept of the AOB. By 1991 Professor Freer was of the opinion the AOB proposal required more work before it was presented to the ASO general membership.

The AOB proposal came up again at the ASO meeting in Perth in 1991. After considering the comments produced through the questionnaires, Professor Freer reported, “the emerging concept is one of assessment by comparison.” The overriding elements were membership participation; standards will be set by the member’s own comparison with other cases. The AOB certification process was modified and considerably adapted to ASO membership preferences. The certification process proposed would require the following steps:

- 1) The intending Board applicant had to nominate 5 cases and submit them for assessment, to achieve accreditation.
- 2) Then the applicant would submit a minimum of two (2) of those cases after treatment after which AOB Certification was granted.
- 3) AOB applicants were required to demonstrate a commitment to an active continuation education philosophy by attendance at courses and lectures, by accumulating a number of “points” for continuing education over a period of 3 years.
- 4) To underline the importance of research, Credits could also be earned by participation in research and publication.
- 5) AOB Certification would require constant updating or recertification. Initially this recertification was required every four years.

Professor Freer and Dr. Alan Pollard were adamant that the process was to be seen as a rewarding professional pursuit, not so onerous so as to act as a disincentive. They also included the proposal to include post-graduate orthodontic students in the AOB Certification process, which is seen to be the “backbone” of AOB membership.

Due to the importance and complexity of the proposals, no motion had been included in the report. The proposal called for an ASO general membership postal vote to ratify the new proposals. The 1991 meeting unanimously passed a motion of support.

Astonishingly, the subsequent ASO members’ postal vote in 1992 to ratify the necessary constitutional changes narrowly failed to receive the necessary three quarters majority a constitutional change required. Professor Freer was not daunted.

### *A Board is Born:*

The formation of the AOB was eventually put to the ASO membership at the Adelaide ASO, Inc. Annual General Meeting in 1993 after a further report to ASO Federal Council for that meeting which included the required notice of a motion. “That the Australian Society of Orthodontists shall establish an Australian Orthodontic Board which shall be defined in the Constitution and By-Laws and its ultimate control shall be vested in the ASO Federal Council.”

By this time Professor Freer was able to utilise events outside orthodontics that were coming about. Outside agencies such as the Victorian Dental Board were placing pressure on continuing education requirements. Professor Freer warned, “It seems highly likely that Government will require implementation of standards assessment procedures in the near future.” Although to date, there are continuing education requirements to maintain dental registration only in Victoria and the ACT, all other State Dental Boards have continuing education requirements in their sights.

Interestingly, Professor Freer’s proposition of an AOB had undergone a transformation, going from something similar to the American Orthodontic Board to a much more membership-focused process. The change in the AOB certification process seemed to be determined by the requirements of the ASO membership, rather than imposing a process upon the membership. There was a greater emphasis placed on rewarding the applicant with Certification through the AOB process

Now the focus of Professor Freer and Dr. Alan Pollard became more related to the operational aspects of the AOB. The publication of the AOB certification protocol marked the initial steps in 1995. The funding or seeding capital was provided to the AOB by the ASO, Inc.. Operation of the AOB would not be possible without start-up monies. The ASO Education committee was to maintain management of the AOB in the early period of the AOB. The plan was to allow members of the ASO Education committee to fill the Board positions until sufficient candidates are certified. The AOB committee would then be comprised of a chairperson appointed by Council and five members, being one nominee of each state branch accepted by Council.

Dr. Alan Pollard was the prime mover on the procedures and documentation of the Australian Orthodontic Board including the original design of related documentation and the AOB logo, which still prevails.

The Bylaws for the AOB were added to the ASO, Inc. Constitution in 1996. The preamble to the objectives read: "the Australian Orthodontic Board is essential to the long term evolution of orthodontic education and treatment standards at a national level. The aim of voluntary participation should be a rewarding professional pursuit for full members wishing to provide the highest standards of professional care. The concept is one of assessment by comparison of case presentations and further, members seeking accreditation shall be required to demonstrate a commitment to an active continuing education philosophy. The composition of the board will initially comprise members of the education committee until sufficient candidates are available then the board will comprise a chairperson appointed by Council and five members, being one nominee of each state branch accepted by Council.

A booklet outlining in detail the workings of the Board and how a prospective applicant might begin the procedure was prepared for the 1996 ASO Congress. The operations of the AOB were then delegated to within the states. The state representative of the Education Committee was recruited as a non-assessing chairperson (*Convenor*) of each State Assessment Committee. The ASO State branches were to remove any fear of "Big Brother." Two (2) assessors for each applicant would be selected. One was to come from a different state.

In the early years progress was reliant, in Dr. Ted Crawford's words, "on Professor Freer's vision and on the strong organizational skills of Dr. Alan Pollard." They were determined that the entire experience was to be non-threatening. Dr. Pollard called it "an inclusionary model"

During the early years Professor Freer as Chairman of the Education Committee was also Chairman of the AOB with appointed Committee members from the respective states. Unfortunately it is not well documented who served as members of the early AOB Committees. Some of the early AOB committee members were; Dr.'s Kim Mezger, Anne Marie Vincent, John Brabant, Jane Spark, Mithran Goonewardene and Wayne Sampson). In 1998 it was determined that the ABO had reached critical numbers to allow formation of the AOB committee as described above. The AOB could now be a self-directing committee. Dr. Tony Sutton became the inaugural AOB Chairman in 1999 and the state representatives within their respective states assisted Dr. Sutton. Dr. Sutton introduced the concept of publication of the AOB Membership principally in the State ADA Newsletters. This along with Professor Freer's influence probably goes a long way to explain why AOB uptake in Queensland was highest in the early years.

### *The Growing Years:*

The initial few years after the inception of the AOB were characterised by a flurry of interest, which progressed to a trickle. The first of the ASO members to become AOB Certified occurred in 1999. With what appeared to be a waning interest of the ASO membership in the AOB, came a resolve to focus new efforts to pursue a more proactive role in stimulation of interest. The ASO Federal President of the time, Dr. Ian Watson became concerned for the future of the AOB and according to the outgoing President's report proceeded to research ways on "how we can reenergize our faith in the principal of the Board."

In reality, the AOB membership was 10% of the total ASO membership, which is average for many Orthodontic Boards, but significantly lower than expectations. Again according to Ted Crawford "it (the AOB) showed signs of withering on the vine of member apathy." At the request of then ASO President Dr. Ian Watson, Dr. Ted Crawford succeeded to the AOB Chair in 2002 when he became Vice president of the ASO. In fact, this was to become a regular succession process, highlighting the importance the AOB commands with the ASO Executive. Dr. Crawford was totally committed to the AOB concept and ramped up activity. He conscripted a few dedicated colleagues,

including Dr.'s David Fuller and John Armitage to assist in this essential task. Their ambition was to reach an ASO membership participation rate approaching 40%. The new AOB Committee saw this as the "critical mass" for operation of the AOB.

Dr. Crawford's AOB Committee thought a few things could assist the ABO in becoming more inviting for ASO members. The first of the major changes was announced under Dr. Tony Sutton, which was that ASO Council had approved a change to the recertification timetable such that it had to be recommenced within five (5) years not two (2) as originally laid down. In addition, Dr. Sutton introduced the iniquitously, titled "Old Bastards" category which allowed retention of Certification after 2 cycles for AOB members over 55 years of age. Dr. Crawford and his AOB Committee recognised that one of the other problems had been that Individual State Dental Registration Boards were unwilling to permit the use of the AOB membership and the AOB logo on letterheads and elsewhere for various reasons. Dr. Crawford succeeded in persuading the registration boards to accept the AOB logo for letterheads and elsewhere by the inclusion of the terminology "Certified Member of the Australian Orthodontic Board" used together with the Logo.

Dr. Crawford's AOB Committee did not stop there; other concepts to provide incentive to join up were added. AOB Lapel badges for both stages of the Certification process ("First Stage" and "Certified member") were minted. AOB Membership became listed in the ASO directory and the ASO website by 2002. Another of Dr. Crawford's innovations had been to publicize AOB Membership principally in both Federal and State ADA Newsletters. And quite significantly, the acceptance by the Victorian Dental Board to permit the accumulation of CE credits for participation and completion of AOB certification.

Dr. Crawford's AOB committee established a separate postgraduate student participation in the AOB via the student pathway, which brought about the added benefit of the students presenting AOB cases to the ASO membership at National meetings. Orthodontic product manufactures, specifically 3M Unitek and TP Australia, have assisted in the sponsorship of awards in recognition of the participation of the students and the Universities in the process.

The next AOB Committee was from Queensland and enlisted Dr. Tony Shields as Chairman and Pat Hannan and Colin Nelson. They added the innovation of staff members being recruited within the orthodontic

practice to reduce the workload for the orthodontist in preparation of the ABO cases. This committee also initiated a Strategic Planning initiative, in which the AOB takes a more active role in continuing education for the ASO membership. The outcome of this should lead to additional forms of continuing education for the ASO memberships. Under the direction of Dr. Shields and ASO Federal Council, Dr. Ted Crawford was appointed the position of AOB Registrar.

Dr. Shane Fryer, as Chairman and AOB committee members Mark Cordato and Theo Baisi took over in the now well-established succession process. Dr. Fryer and his AOB committee worked diligently on the AOB registration and “clearing the books” on the actual AOB membership lists. A clear explanation of AOB protocols was developed for future AOB committee’s to follow. Changes to the student AOB case display awards were made. And probably most significantly the Australian Orthodontic Board became the Australasian Orthodontic Board (AOB). Constitutional changes were made to allow participation of the membership of the New Zealand Association of Orthodontists (NZAO). There was a great deal of negotiation and several ASO Constitutional and By Law changes that were required to complete the process. Shane and his AOB committee worked closely with Dr. Winifred Harding and Dr. Peter Fowler to finalise the inclusion of NZAO members and post graduate orthodontic students in the AOB certification process.

Since the inclusion of the NZAO membership in the AOB certification process, Dr. Peter Fowler has negotiated with the New Zealand registration Board to have the AOB Certification included as partial continuing education credits or requirements. Dr. Winifred Harding has been instrumental in insuring the participation of the student membership of the NZAO in the AOB Certification process. The University of Otago students will officially present their AOB cases at the International Orthodontic Congress in Sydney 2010.

The Australasian Orthodontic Board is an internationally recognised body. The innovative design of the AOB has been modelled by other Orthodontic Boards around the world. Most unique to the AOB are the prospective selection of cases to be treated, the periodic recertification process and the emphasis on continuing education.

As a Society we owe a great deal of thanks to those early believers in the development of the AOB. I do hope that in time all AOB members can come to appreciate the efforts of those that “got the ball rolling.”

Of special recognition would be Professor Terry Freer, Dr. Alan Pollard and Dr. Ted Crawford. They did a great service for the ASO membership and deserve our recognition for their efforts.

As far as the current AOB Committee, I'll let someone else tell the story . . .

I would like to acknowledge, Professor Terry Freer, Dr. Alan Pollard, Dr. Ted Crawford and Dr. David Taylor for their contributions to this short report on the contemporary history of the AOB. A more complete history of the ASO and AOB will be available in Dr. David Taylor's book in 2010.

*Past Australian and Australasian Orthodontic Board officers*

Australasian Orthodontic Board Executive				
Years	Chairman	Secretary	Treasurer	NZAO Representative
1999-2002	A Sutton			
2002-4	E Crawford	D Fuller	J Armitage	
2004-6	A Shields	P Hannan	C Nelson	
2006-8	S Fryer	M Cordato	T Baisi	
2008-Present	M Razza	C Sim	C Daniels	P Fowler