

Beyond the call of duty

ADRF Chairman Ian Crawford champions pet cause with characteristic persistence

By Danny Chan



Danny Chan

2010 represents a milestone year for the Australian Dental Research Foundation (ADRF) as well as its current serving Chairman. Coincidentally, both the Foundation and its leading spokesperson are marking 40 distinguished years of service to the dental profession and industry.

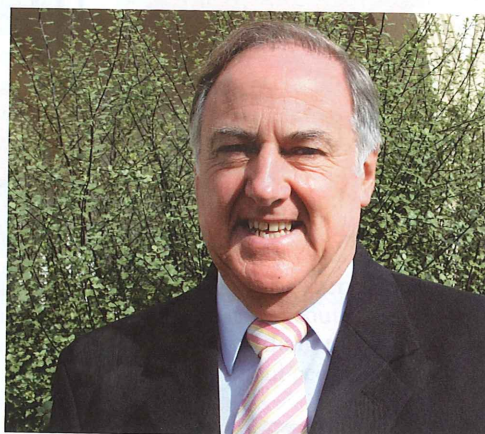
Ian Crawford's a familiar face in Australia's dental circles. Having served as Victorian President of the Australian Dental Industry Association (ADIA) for nine years, his broad smiles and warm handshakes are a friendly fixture at both high profile industry functions as well as intimate gatherings. The ADIA Life Member has been an active proponent of the association ever since he first joined in 1969. He was also Chairman of the ADIA Federal Exhibition Committee for nine of the 14 years that he sat on the committee.

Ian's palpable passion for the trade and profession has not waned in a decades-spanning career that has seen him through senior and national roles in major dental companies including Dentsply, Ivoclar Vivadent and ICI (dental division). His vast industry experience now stands him in good stead as Project Manager of Australian Dental Association Victorian Branch.

Melbourne dentists also know him as leading evangelist for the *Dentists for Cleaner Water* project that encourages installation of amalgam separators in dental surgeries. For the past three years, Ian has been campaigning for the statewide initiative as a means to prevent dental amalgam waste from entering our water systems and landfills. He was duly complimented by ADIA for being "one of the major driving forces" behind the successful environmental project.

Ian's commitment towards the industry extended into dental research 16 years ago when he joined the Australian Dental Research Foundation as an ADIA Representative. His keen leadership skills and indomitable support towards research funding informs his current role as the Foundation's Chairman, a position he has held for the last 4 years.

Main duties as ADRF Chairman include convening Board of Directors meetings, seek-



Ian Crawford

ing sponsorship for scholarships, liaising with research adjudicators as well as being the Foundation's "day to day spokesperson". Of these, Ian outlines his most challenging role as "gaining sponsorship and support in a most difficult current climate to enable, maintain and provide high quality research."

Among his many pet causes, research funding is also the one Ian is most passionate about. As sensitive as any fund-raising topic can be in the current doom-and-gloom economic climate, he remains steadfast in articulating the Foundation's plea for more financial support.

"As we enter ADRF's fifth decade, we must uphold what our previous guardians established and that is to be supportive of the many keen Australian researchers out there who have some wonderful, new innovative ideas to keep dentistry to the fore front."

Even in these tough financial times, Ian is unapologetic about setting research funding as a priority.

"The dental community must have continual progress for patients to be serviced in progressive ways by means of finding 'new' treatment and solving problems in the mouth," he impassions.

"Both the dental profession and the industry must continue to be supportive if both organizations are to remain active and not become dormant."

Eight years ago Ian and his ADRF colleagues decided to target companies outside the dental industry for funding, a move intensified in recent years by the sluggish economy.

"Dentists have great spending power and make up an important demographic for many businesses. What we hope to do is align the professional aspirations of ADRF with the marketing goals of these entities and broker a win-win situation for all."

The team has had a measure of success with a leading financial institution, but Ian believes much more needs to be done.

"Funding is harder to come by these days," Ian confides, "so we've got to look at every possible area. We have switched from solely approaching dental companies and dentists to now include banks and automobile manufacturers."

Beyond marketing hoopla, he says that ADRF's continued success largely depends on cooperation between dentists and dental companies.

"We have to see a link between the profession and the industry. Because they have different agendas does not mean they cannot establish common goals and co-exist harmoniously."

"That is why professional bodies like ADRF take the initiative to establish dialogue and foster cooperation

between these groups."

Ian applies the same logical reasoning to courting dental largesse. He believes that to impress upon his target audience the wisdom of research funding is to let them see the value for themselves.

While he reminds dentists how dental research is fundamental to their own professional development, he parlays its importance to manufacturers in light of a product's clinical endorsement.

"And when that doesn't work," Ian says only half-jokingly, "we appeal to their sense of responsibility."

He adds: "One of the roles of the ADRF is to give dental graduates and undergraduates a vehicle to do all their important research. Many researchers who started their academic careers with ADRF have gone on to become highly regarded leaders of the dental profession."

"Surely its continuance is to be encouraged and merits the support from the industry and profession. After all, we are the only one of its kind in this country."

In addition to the many hats Ian wears in the dental industry, he is also actively involved in sports management. He was President of the Prahran Cricket Club for 27 years, and has recently been elevated to Legend

status in the club's Hall of Fame. He is also the proud Life Member of the Cricket Club, Cricket Victoria and the Brisbane Lions, previously the Fitzroy Football Club.

"My passion for cricket and Australian-rules football is known among friends and peers in the dental industry, and I often get asked about it," he chuckles.

"Every bit of my involvement in sports was and is in an honorary capacity, so I'm there purely for the love of it."

As is evident from all his accomplishments and accolades, Ian takes pride in giving his best in whatever he does. The ADRF Chairman can indeed look back on 40 illustrious years in trade and organised dentistry. When asked what gives him greatest satisfaction, he replies unassumingly:

"To remain involved in the dental business after so many years is a reward in itself – and is what continues to give me delight, satisfaction and happiness."

"I've enjoyed every moment of it. I've no regrets about the career path I've chosen. Along the way, I've met some wonderful people and made life-long friends."

"All I hope is that in some small way, I have contributed to the dental family in this country."



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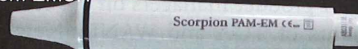


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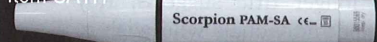
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