



DEAN'S REPORT

To say 2005 was eventful would be a gross understatement. In August the School was damaged by an explosion and fire. The School's safety procedures worked extremely well in the immediate aftermath of the fire. Under the leadership of Professor Chris Easton, who was Acting Dean at the time, the performance of our staff was exemplary. Kevin Cooper, Geoff Deeble (who was Acting Laboratory Manager), Chris Tompkins and Lee Welling received special awards from the Vice-Chancellor for their actions during and after the fire. A large number of RSC staff and students did an amazing job during the cleanup after the fire resulting in a return to the building in less than four weeks. As the year progressed demolition of the damaged section of the top floor of the Birch Building commenced and plans were developed for reconstruction.

2005 was a year of considerable change for the Research School of Chemistry and for the Australian National University. During the year the University began to organise itself into ANU Colleges. The Research School of Chemistry is a member of the largest College namely the College of Science (CoS) which by choice is a Federated College with the internal members remaining independent. I was appointed as Convenor of the College of Science and I work closely with the Dean of CoS, Professor Tim Brown, and the College Executive. We aim to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our education and research programs through better planning and coordination across the Science Faculty and Science Research Schools of the ANU.

One concrete example of the increased coordination afforded by CoS was announced in December. From the beginning of 2006 Professor David Ollis of the RSC will move to a joint appointment as Head of the Department of Chemistry in the Faculty of Science. One of David's aims will be to increase the biochemical content of the undergraduate curriculum. This is a perfect example of one of the main aims of the ANU Colleges. The RSC has a major research program in biological chemistry, which at the moment is not mirrored in the undergraduate teaching program. The CoS will help to facilitate this improved alignment of undergraduate curriculums with our postgraduate research programs.

Late in the year there were two very happy developments in the School. Associate Professor Mick Sherburn was awarded the prestigious Le Fèvre Medal of the Australian Academy of Science. Just after Christmas Dr Michelle Coote was promoted to Fellow and was granted tenure. These events were exceptionally pleasing. I was also delighted to present the 2005 Dean's Award for General Staff Excellence to Bob O'Brien who willingly takes on many and varied tasks, often assigned to him at short notice.

Professor Chris Easton took a leading role in a successful application for an ARC Centre of Excellence – The Centre for Free Radical Chemistry and Biotechnology. Other RSC staff involved in the Centre include Associate Professor Mick Sherburn and Dr Michelle Coote. A second initiative during the year involving Professors Chris Easton, Nick Dixon and David Ollis, was the successful bid for a CSIRO Emerging Science Initiative – Synthetic Enzymes for Synthetic Chemistries – in collaboration with CSIRO Entomology and CSIRO Molecular and Health Technologies.