It is the radiographers who have helped so much in the fostering of the science of radiography; every radiologist should remember the friendship of the radiographer of the past, and delight in extending that same comradeship in the future.1

Before there was any formal training of radiographers, technicians (as they were previously known) were recruited from hospital staff and no qualifications were considered necessary. Sometimes an interest in amateur photography might be taken into account, but more commonly the man selected knew little or nothing about the inside of a dark room, let alone an x-ray laboratory.2

There was no consistent formal training of radiographers until 1929 when the Melbourne Technical College began offering a radiological training course. The certificate was issued jointly by the radiological section of the Victorian Branch of the British Medical Association and the Working Men’s College.3

The College and the Australian Institute of Radiography (AIR) have had a history dating back to the mid 1930s – at that time the College was known as the Australian and New Zealand Association of Radiology (ANZAR) and the AIR was not formed yet – there were Technical Sections of the ANZAR.

The College wished to be involved in the training of technicians. The training of technicians is first mentioned at an Ordinary Meeting of the NSW section of the ANZAR in July 1935. At the provisional executive meeting of the ANZAR in September 1935, Dr Nisbet suggested he attend the upcoming technicians meeting and personally explain to them the objects of the proposed Association and the benefits and advantages to the technicians should they decide to become members4 (the first named technical member mentioned in the ANZAR Minutes is J C Keage of St Luke’s Hospital in Darlinghurst, who was later the Secretary of the NSW Branch of the AIR).5

The University of Sydney Extension Board began training technicians in 1937 with general lectures on Tuesday and special lectures on Thursdays. The ANZAR realised that the demand for x-ray services was increasing rapidly and that a constant supply of competent radiographers would be required. It was recognised that most of the senior radiographers who were already engaged in this work had, over the years, become highly skilled. It was therefore decided that any radiographer of 10 years standing should be allowed to sit for an examination arranged by the association, and if they satisfied the examiners they were given a certificate acknowledging their ability. All other radiographers had to attend the training course. Those holding the diploma were admitted as technical members of the ANZAR.6

The first list of technicians for endorsement by the Association were named in the ANZAR minutes of the Executive Council Meeting on 29th October 1937: Mr E Pottinger; E Austin; A Smith; R Jenkins; Miss Hardy; Miss Burns; Mr Broadfoot; Miss S Carter; Mr L Sheldon; Mr D Carter (editor of the AIR journal The Radiographer); Mr R L Cooper; Mr N Outterside (joined the Technical Section of the ANZAR at its inauguration in 1935, and was its Vice President from 1941–1945, the first Federal Council President of AIR and NSW Branch President); and Mr Young (from 31st December 1947, technical members ceased to be members of ANZAR).

At the end of the University course, the ANZAR had little or no say in the management of affairs and absolutely none regarding the financial side. For this reason the relationship between the ANZAR and the University faded out. The Melbourne Technical Course remained the only one available in Australia at this time. However, it was eventually decided that the Association undertake full responsibility for the training of radiographers.7

The AIR was formed in 1947 and the Australian and New Zealand Association of Radiologists (ANZAR – the name had changed in 1942) was able to allot funds to some AIR branches, with which to help defray a portion of their initial expenses in the formation of the Institute. An ANZAR representative from each State could be consulted by the AIR branches. Training in each state was to be arranged by the ANZAR state representative.8

At a meeting of the ANZAR Education Committee, it was suggested, along with a representative from the AIR, that an “autonomous Conjoint Federal Board be formed to control the standards of education and the examining of radiographers.”9 The Conjoint Federal Board consisted of seven members – four radiologists, two members nominated by AIR and a physicist named by the College Council. (The ANZAR became the College of Radiologists (Australia & New Zealand in 1949).

The Conjoint Board of the College and the AIR was formally established in 1950. By means of state conjoint committees the board was to be responsible for the correlation of teaching activities in all states and the issue of a Certificate of Competence to candidates on completion of a course of satisfactory training.
and prescribed examination. A schedule of requirements for the issue of certificates for radiographers and a course of study was prepared the following year, and on 22nd November 1952 Council resolved that the Board be given all powers necessary for the establishment and control of teaching and examining bodies for the training of radiographers in Australasia.

Though it was recognised that it was the support of radiologists and physicists that had enabled radiographers to set up their own institute (incorporated in 1950 with 300 members), some radiographers criticised the establishment of the federal conjoint board who felt that they should control their own destinies. There was continued tension between the AIR and the College over tuition and syllabus requirements. On 6th March 1959, Council approved a memorandum setting out a charter of the Board, defining its duties and responsibilities and that of state conjoint committees “in the hope that this would clarify the duties of all concerned in training, examination and certification of technical personnel”.

In June 1982 a majority vote at the AGM of the AIR decided that the College would no longer have a representative on their Council, though formal dissolution of the Conjoint Board did not take place until 31st December 1987. From 1st January 1988, the Professional Accreditation and Educational Board of the AIR was to take over from the Conjoint Board and assess radiography educational programs for all Australian states, while the Conjoint Board Diploma was to be replaced by a Statement of Accreditation issued by the Professional Accreditation and Educational Board. The relationship between the College and the AIR continues today, highlighted with the combined scientific meeting in Brisbane this year.

References
1 Nisbet T. A Dream Comes True. The Radiographer 1948; 1 (1): 1948
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3 Murray-Smith, Stephen and Dare, Anthony John, The Tech (Hyland House Publishing, 1987)
4 ANZAR Provisional Executive Meeting, September 4 1935
5 ANZAR Executive Committee Minutes, June 7 1935
7 Nisbet, ‘A Dream Comes True’
8 Australian and New Zealand Association of Radiologists (ANZAR). Annual Report, 1947
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11 Ibid, p. 91

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