

President's Report 2004–2005

This report was presented to the Advisory Panel and Board of the *ANZJFT* on the 24 and 27 October 2005 at a memorable Family Therapy Conference in Sydney. I wish to thank the organising committee, NSWFTA, and particularly Carmel Flaskas as the journal representative on the committee. Once again the needs of the journal were more than generously met.

Preparing the report provided an opportunity to reflect on my two years as President and previous two as Vice-President. At the beginning of 2005, I hoped to complete three projects: the SWOT Analysis, the building of the Advisory Panel and the beginning of a policy manual. As I come to the end of this time, I am heartened by the achievement of these goals but also confronted with the many tasks still to be completed.

One of the highlights of the past year has been the opportunity to work with an extremely enthusiastic and committed executive: Barbara Fraser, as vice-president, Marten Johns as secretary and Linda MacKay as treasurer. Each has been consistent, reliable and professional and has provided me with excellent emotional and practical support. Together we have worked to address the overburdening of the editors by taking on tasks more properly in the realm of the Executive. Much progress has been made in drawing a clearer distinction between Editorial, as opposed to Executive and Board functions.

I remain amazed at both the quality and extent of the work of the editors, Maureen and Hugh Crago, whose dedication and unwillingness to settle for less than the best possible product gives us the journal we have today. They continue to manage both the content of the journal and staff, the majority of whom provide their services for free.

The restructure of the Board that took place at the last AGM has allowed a greater focus in the president's role. The current working Board comprises the Executive, plus Alistair Campbell, Research Adviser, Rick Whiteside, New Zealand Adviser, Paul Rhodes (Website Maintenance) and Roxanne Garven.

The Advisory Panel is a new concept for the journal, allowing the many senior members in our field who have valuable expertise, yet may not necessarily want the responsibility of a Board position, to continue to contribute. The panel has been constructed over the past year with the advice of editors, Executive and Board members. While it is not intended to be a representative body, every effort has been made to select members who bring particular knowledge and connections into the group. The original concept was to include a number of people who had particular expertise in related fields and not necessarily directly within

family therapy. While we do have a few of these, the majority are family therapists. We have already had occasion to call on the expertise of members of this group.

In essence, the overall restructure has aimed at management culture where the connections are through work for the journal rather than the bonds of friendship. We have been delighted with how smoothly this has occurred and how willingly people with the journal's best interests at heart have embraced it.

Another goal for this year was to formalise policies which guide key decision-making. To this end all the minutes from the previous four years' Executive and Board meetings were reviewed to extract the decisions made over this time. This was in line with the ideal of making all processes as transparent as possible.

The AGM saw the end of my term as president and Barbara Fraser stepping into this role. In keeping with our commitment to follow clear and transparent process, the search for a new vice-president began earlier in the year with the construction of a list of possible candidates based on the qualities they could bring to the role. Chris Hunt was elected as Vice-President.

The SWOT analysis, which was begun by the Editors, Executive and Board in 2004, was further refined. It was heartening to realise that many of the issues identified had already been addressed through the changes to structure and focus on policy development.

Traditionally the website has been a challenging area and this year was no exception. It became clear that we required an assistant who would work closely and cooperatively with our web master, David MacKay. Linda MacKay offered to fulfil this role as an interim measure until the AGM. Paul Rhodes has already proved a valuable asset. The year 2005 saw the first joint discussion between the *ANZJFT* and the British Association for Family Therapy. An article by Joel Cullin (26, 3), was posted on the website. Sadly, technical difficulties at both ends meant there were no replies from AFT. While 60 *ANZJFT* comments were posted, it is clear that future discussions need to be more accessible to members of the family therapy community at *all* stages of training and experience. I remain hopeful that the discussion will become a valuable source of promotion of the journal both locally and overseas, in addition to being an interesting and engaging professional resource for Australian readers.

I sincerely thank David MacKay for his professionalism, good humour and dogged determination in the face of seemingly overwhelming odds.

In 2002 a working party was formed under *ANZJFT* auspices to explore the formation of a national association. The *ANZJFT* recognised that it had been acting as the de facto national body, with neither the resources nor the mandate to do this effectively. At the 2004 national family therapy conference, a proposal was put that an association be formed and a working group convened to develop firm proposals to put before the 2005 conference. The first meeting was held in Melbourne in November 2004 and was attended by representatives from QAFT, TFTASA, VAFT and the ANZJFT, and with apologies from NSWFTA. Significant progress was made at this meeting. The stated aim of AAFT was to support the development of local and state professional family therapy groups while providing a unifying body. The working group met on a number of occasions by teleconference and placed before the 2005 conference draft rules of Association and an Organisational Model. Throughout the process the journal representatives, Barbara Fraser and I, have remained firm in our resolve that journal subscription must be an integral part of AAFT membership, on the grounds that this is one of the markers of a profession. This model follows the very successful British arrangement.

Promotion and marketing remain a perennial problem. Two possible directions that need to be actively developed have been suggested. Rick Whiteside, Board member from

New Zealand, has suggested that the major family therapy training bodies be asked to include the journal subscription, at student rates, in course fees. This could also be tied to the annual training directory, which is currently provided free of charge to advertisers. A second option was to invite institutions to sponsor an issue of the journal on a theme relevant to their agency. This area needs urgent attention and all suggestions are welcome.

Another area that requires immediate attention is that of Indigenous representation. Seeking appropriate advice from Indigenous people is crucial to addressing this.

The editorial term of Maureen and Hugh Crago expires at the end of 2008, and during the final year, the editor(s) elect will work alongside Maureen and Hugh, who have already provided opportunities to invited guest editors, to encourage interested people to experience the editorial task first hand. The Executive and Board are acting to ensure that the process towards selection is timely and transparent.

I come to the end of my term as president with both satisfaction and sadness. I leave as convinced as ever that to call itself a profession, a group must engage in energetic, intellectual and forward-thinking dialogue. The *ANZJFT* provides Australian family therapists with the ideal vehicle.

Catherine Sanders
Immediate Past President

Thanking Catherine Sanders, Immediate Past President

The ANZJFT Inc.'s new constitution rules that a Vice-President serves a two-year apprenticeship to the President and then holds the office of President for a further two years. Catherine Sanders was our first Vice-President, and she has now completed her Presidency. She carried further an agenda launched by her predecessor Carmel Flaskas, implementing the principle that all Board members have a portfolio. This transforms Board members from armchair experts to people with a greater awareness of some of the challenges facing the Journal. Portfolios include Research Consultant (Alistair Campbell), Website Content Updating (Paul Rhodes), and the familiar Executive positions. The editors are grateful to Carmel and Catherine for their perseverance in achieving reform (which now needs to be maintained), and also for upholding the *ANZJFT*

tradition of collegial relationships between President and editor. Aware that the editor of the *ANZJFT* has always carried a much heavier workload than the editors of the British Journal, or *Family Process*, the President has always sought to support the editors. We thank Catherine for her honesty, straightforwardness, tact and intelligence. Catherine has been a hard-working, loyal servant of the *ANZJFT* over many years. She was Foundation Coordinator of Network News, holding that position through 36 issues, and for part of that time she jointly coordinated Network News and Education Update. She was Associate Editor 1985 to 1995, Board member 1987–1995, and again, 2000 to the present. Catherine's presidency has been the culmination of her long and distinguished involvement.