

Dear Editors,

We would firstly like to express our gratitude to Amaryll Perlesz and Ruth McNair for their article, 'Lesbian Parenting: Insiders' Voices' and Liz Telford for her article, 'Therapy with Lesbian Couples' (*ANZJFT*, 25, 3). Both articles were welcome contributions and will certainly inform our thinking and practice.

Given that these articles alerted us to issues surrounding diversity and sensitivity, it was somewhat puzzling and disappointing, however, to reflect on the comments offered in the editorial. The singling out of potential contributors, whose articles were not submitted, was combined with the remark concluding that if practitioners do not offer their work for publication, '... there is less justification for complaining about invisibility'. The inference here seems to be that marginalisation of gay and lesbian issues is the sole responsibility of those most affected by it or working

alongside it. Rather, we would contend that we all share a responsibility for challenging heteronormative and heterosexist attitudes, the impact of marginalisation, and the effects of discrimination. Incorporating a consciousness about these issues should be a challenge we all take up.

We believe that it is unfortunate that the original intention and validity of the notion of 'invisibility', as pointed out by Perlesz and McNair, has been lost. Is it not surprising, however, that given the social context and complexity of this topic, that family therapy journals may parallel this process? Can we do this differently?

**Yours sincerely,
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Dear Hugh and Maureen,

I've worked mainly in family's homes now for the past four years, and I probably take for granted this way of working. In *ANZJFT* 25, 4: 177–182, Andrew Fuller's article, actually written back in 1991, mourns the 'lost ideal' of working in-home with families of people with psychiatric illnesses in Australia. The author claims that he knows of no comprehensive in-home family therapy models — but I do family therapy in-home!

I find that I sometimes get a better idea of family dynamics by seeing families in their home environment than I would in an office setting. There certainly can be distractions — phones ringing, young children demanding attention, etc., but I have learnt to be very flexible. For instance, a child even as young as three or four can be asked if they know what Mummy or Daddy are talking about, and what they think. Of course there are some subjects that I would discuss without a child present — however, I also go on the assumption that they see and hear a lot of what goes on anyway, and that to exclude them from conversations can be unrealistic.

I set up a working relationship with clients right from the start where we get clear on our therapeutic goals. This sets up the atmosphere of work rather than a social visit. Some of the goals are quite practical, including the provision of parenting strategies, as my program is funded to provide this. So for instance I

might use quite a strategic approach — looking at how the attempted solution to the problem becomes a problem in itself. I might look at a typical pattern of interaction between family members, mapping it out in detail with the family, and looking together at where things could be done differently to alter this 'dance'.

Andrew mourns the loss of this type of work (in the psychiatric field specifically, I know), but my take is that I do this type of work as a given, as part of my role funded under the Family Support program. This will continue to be the case in my new role — on 1st Feb, I commence a family counselling position with Meridian Youth and Family Services (Anglicare), under Helen Landau. About half of this work will be outreach family therapy, to families in their homes.

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Alana's letter was originally disseminated in the UK-based family therapy discussion list maintained by Chris Evans and is published here in slightly altered form with kind permission. Anyone who wishes to join the open list, e-mail Chris at chris@psyctc.org