

**The following report was presented to the Board on September 27th 2004.** These, our 25th Anniversary meetings, were held in the context of the annual conference, hosted by the Queensland Association of Family Therapy. Both journal meetings and conference were energetic, forward looking and optimistic. We thank the conference organisers for their support of the journal both materially in terms of organisation and practical matters and personally for their goodwill.

The past year has provided me with the opportunity to pursue a number of directions and develop a sound understanding of the workings of the *ANZJFT*. As the new president of the Board, and following in Carmel Flaskas' able footsteps, it has been challenging and instructive to work at such close range with both our editors and Executive. In my role I have been wisely and reliably supported by members of the Executive, including Barbara Fraser, who accepted the role of vice-president this year, Ann Stark who continued as secretary from last year, as did treasurer, Linda MacKay. With our editors, Hugh and Maureen Crago, we have met formally each month by telephone link-up to follow an extensive agenda.

Decisions made by this Board and the clarity of thought of previous Executives has allowed us to pursue our work in a more focused way. Perhaps the most important issue is recognition that our core business is publication and promotion of a journal. This has allowed two important initiatives to develop, which have major implications for the future growth of the journal and for the field in general.

### **The National Life of Family Therapy in Australia**

The first of these came from an understanding that the journal has been acting as a de facto national body, without the resources or community mandate to effectively fill this role. This allowed our previous President to organise a working party from within journal ranks to prepare a proposal to be presented to the Board at the 24th Family Therapy conference in 2003. This having been done, *ANZJFT* representative, Barbara Fraser, was able to step back and become an equal member of a group, convened by Maria Nichterlein, which was entrusted to take the next steps toward formation of a national association. This work has gone on throughout the year

with email communication between its members who included the journal representative, State presidents and nominated individuals. This has, at times, been a challenging process as members debated questions of representation and process. An exciting development was an offer from VAFT that they support the process through the creation of an interim secretariat, with representatives from the State associations and the journal. This offer was explored during a number of meetings and was endorsed by the conference. The planning of a national association is now in the hands of a subcommittee, including myself as the representative of the *ANZJFT*, to work on a detailed proposal for the form and function of the association.

### **The Restructure of the Board**

The second major matter was the restructure of the Board to form a smaller working group, akin to the current executive, supported by an advisory panel. These discussions began within the forum meetings in 2002 and in 2003; a subcommittee comprising Carmel Flaskas (convener), Adrienne Martin and Ann Stark was commissioned to prepare a report recommending specific changes to the structure of the Board/Association and the constitutional changes these would require. The annual general meeting of the Board saw the proposal passed and it now comprises Catherine Sanders, President; Barbara Fraser, Vice-President; Marten Johns, Secretary; Linda MacKay, Treasurer; Alistair Campbell, Akivra Bouris, Annabel Hanke and Rick Whiteside. Each one will have their own portfolio and will formally report to the Board at the AGM. The proposal that an advisory panel be appointed was also endorsed and it is now the task of the Board to select a group representative of both family therapy interests and those with expertise in areas of relevance to production of the journal. I thank each and every retiring Board member for their contribution.

### **The Activities of the Executive 2003–2004**

At the more immediate level, the activities of the executive can be loosely grouped into three categories: IT, Marketing and Promotions, and Staff and Personnel.

**IT**

Three major initiatives have been pursued on this front. The first is the development of the new interactive website produced by our webmaster, David MacKay, that allows for a greater degree of interactivity between members. Having developed our site to this stage, we have offered the associations in each state a free page for their use, entered via the *ANZJFT* home page. We see this as an act of goodwill and cooperation to our constituents. In speaking of the website, the work of Jan Victory, who was appointed assistant to the editors of the website, should also be acknowledged.

The work on the website has also allowed us to solve the problem of offering the journal online so subscribers may access past and current articles by password. Over the past few years it has become increasingly clear that this was an expectation of our institutional and some of our private subscribers and that if we were to maintain our place in the market this was an essential service to offer. Our success on this front encouraged us to offer the same service to related small journals that may wish to buy a space on our site for their publication. At this stage, each journal has expressed cautious interest and a desire to explore the proposal further.

Another exciting development has been the 'in-principle' agreement with *The Journal of Family Therapy* (Britain) and *Family Process* (United States) to proceed with joint discussions in 2005. This is an email-based conversation whereby readers join a list and a discussion based on a current article in one of the three journals is delivered directly to their inbox. We believe this initiative will effectively locate us on an international stage and join the *ANZJFT* as an equal participant with two of the most prestigious journals in our field. It also solves the technical difficulties that bedevilled our own discussion process, which Maria Nichterlein and Julie Burgess-Manning worked so hard to support and for which I sincerely thank them. I have no doubt their effort laid foundations for our current initiatives. It is a great credit to our editor Maureen Crago to have achieved such agreement and speaks to the respect with which our journal is viewed overseas.

**Promotion and Marketing**

In order to take an objective approach to running the journal, the executive undertook a SWOT Analysis which forced us to articulate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats our journal faces. The analysis will form the basis of our market-

ing plan and help dictate our future direction. Our goal to seek collaboration with other like-minded groups has led us to seek connection with the interest groups of the Australian Psychological Society. The response has been positive and this liaison work will become a portfolio for one of our new board members. Steps have also been taken to promote the journal to members of State associations, and plans are in place for e-distribution of sample papers through some associations.

**Board, Editors, Staff and Supporters**

The *ANZJFT* is largely a voluntary organisation where many work entirely for free and those who are paid receive a salary far below that to which they are entitled. These people form the backbone of the journal, and recognition of both their generosity and wisdom is important. Within the Executive we have been very aware of the number of tasks one of our editors, Maureen Crago, undertakes, which are beyond the role of editor and detract from the editorial task. This appreciation fuels our motivation to develop specific portfolios for Board members. Both our editors must be thanked for the work they do that ensures this journal is viewed as a world-class publication.

A recognition that the journal's wellbeing will be served by a strong connection to the working body of family therapists who perceive an ownership of the publication led to personal contact being made with State presidents and key people in states where no association exists. Our goal is to compile a comprehensive list of supporters who will form a body of goodwill, a point of contact and be available to undertake specific tasks as they arise.

**In Summary**

There can be little doubt that the Executive has had a productive and interesting year. I have thoroughly enjoyed the company, goodwill and co-operation of each member of the Executive and our editors. Each one has contributed more than could be reasonably hoped, with enormous grace and good humour. I have also enjoyed the warmth and generosity of Board members and colleagues who I have encountered during the year. I remain powerfully convinced that the approaches we loosely call family therapy and the *ANZJFT*, which supports and promotes these, are well worth all our effort.

**Catherine Sanders**

President of the Board, 2004 