

REFLECTIONS ON BEING IN THE ROLE OF PRESIDENT OF APAS

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As Freud noted:

One day, in retrospect, the years of struggle will strike you as the most beautiful.

My presidency followed that of Julie Meadows and preceded that of Louise Gyler. I had previously been a Vice-President and a Scientific Chair who organised two APAS conferences. I had also been a consultant to the APAS Executive to derive a strategic plan for Viv Elton's Executive which was voted on by the membership. The plan noted the need to streamline committees in order to reduce the pressure on our human resources and to increase our sense of identification with the Society.

In taking on the role of President I was mindful that I was joining a long coil of esteemed predecessors who had contributed to the growing sense of identity of the Australian Society. I felt it thus not only to be a great privilege, but also a great responsibility.

In terms of APAS's identity, as a consequence of my role on the IPA Asia Pacific Planning Committee, I also realised that our Society was increasingly becoming linked with our Indo-Asian colleagues, as we moved towards the establishment of a fourth IPA region.

In general, I found my role as APAS President in some ways to be like no other leadership roles that I had been in during my working life. This was in part due to the impact of the

historic world event, that of the COVID Pandemic and the dawning awareness of an event that would change us all forever.

COVID first and foremost brought a great sense of uncertainty and challenge for us as analysts and as teachers with candidates. We became unsure if and how we could continue our work and teaching. Members became isolated and robbed of their usual opportunities to be with each other in a way that helped to sustain them. In all these ways there was an impost on our energy that led to a level of exhaustion in dealing with some of the seemingly imperceptible influences of the Pandemic. Throughout the Pandemic we did manage to encourage connection amongst members and candidates by bringing people together in virtual ways. The annual conferences were a great way to do this for our members and candidates, but also as a means of staying in touch with our extended psychoanalytic family on the Open Days.

My Executive thus faced many challenges in ensuring the wellbeing of our candidates and members. There were other issues apart from the Pandemic that impacted on the well-being of members. I recall, for example, the challenges associated with the death of our candidate Raj Maheshwari and the unusual circumstance of the death of our member, Michael Wearing. In addition to my role representing APAS at the funerals and memorial events and importantly offering condolences to the families on behalf of the Society, I also recognised at these times the importance of thinking through with my Executive the many impacts of these deaths on members.

My experience as President I feel was also linked to the unusual pressures on an organisation such as ours, one wherein its office bearers are sometimes subject to unusual pressures or projections. I thought about how as an Executive and an organisation we needed to be able to

contain the many potentially toxic elements that could be projected onto the Executive and compromise its ability to function effectively.

In the light of the more unique pressures on our organisation I felt there were number of key elements that were especially important to the effective functioning of the Executive.

In particular, I felt that APAS needed well-defined structures and processes that would provide a powerful matrix of important containers. I felt these were particularly important, not only to the enterprise of training candidates, but also for protecting our members and the public.

An example of such a container is an effective Ethics and Professional Standards (EPS) Committee with clearly articulated codes and guidelines. In this regard I was very pleased to have initiated Governance reviews and reforms, in particular revisions to the Constitution and the Code of Ethics. Building on the work of the former administration (as mentioned by Julie Meadows in her presentation) and with the support of Louise Hird in particular, I was pleased to formalise another potentially containing structure for a coordinated approach to training, that of the NEAT Committee, which was proposed to the membership and voted on in 2021. In this regard I also want to note the considerable work subsequently undertaken by Louise Gyler and her Executive with the governance reforms and with NEAT.

Moreover, I also found APAS to have many similarities to other organisations in which I had held leadership roles. Consequently, I realised that to be effective organisation we needed ongoing and careful planning, an articulation of effective strategies and regular review in order to be prepared to respond to unexpected challenges.

One such challenge during my term was a financial challenge associated with a completely unexpected superannuation liability. In responding to this challenge, I believe my Executive had what I believe was a well thought out and planned approach. In this approach and through the advice of Louise Gird we were ably assisted by *pro bono* support from Baker and McKenzie, our accountant Vishal Modi (whom I had previously introduced to the Society) and our Treasurer, Leonie Sullivan.

I also found that a leadership style focused on an Executive team approach, with decision making based on grass roots support and consultation, was enormously valuable. I note that this is something that has continued in the form of innovative Town Hall meetings with the current Executive.

Finally, in my role as President I note that I particularly wanted to stress the importance of an approach by the Executive to its work and relationships with each other, one which is based on a culture of respect for each other.

With many of these issues I was fortunate to have followed in the footsteps of my predecessors who had promoted these values.

I end by thanking APAS members for their trust and confidence in me to carry out this important role. I hope in some small way I helped to develop an APAS of which we can all be proud.