

President's Report – 2018 AGM

As GANZ continues to navigate the shift from our previous configuration under the auspices of PACFA, to being a stand-alone organisation, we continue to face a number of challenges. While what stands in front of us is the opportunity to build a community of gestalt practitioners committed to the ongoing development of gestalt (be that in application to therapy, supervision, coaching, consulting or research), but this is balanced against the time it takes to build community and the very real limitation of resources.

On the back of a successful conference in Melbourne last year, the GANZ Community elected a new council. While bringing on board a number of new people, the elected council was also comprised of a number of returning members. Unfortunately, within a relatively short space of time, Leila David (President), Elizabeth Denton (Vice-President) and Trish Landsberger (Secretary), for various reasons, decided to resign. Sophie Board, who was also elected at the AGM, also decided to stand down for personal reasons.

This left the new Council in a very precarious position. After some thinking and reflecting, we made a decision to shuffle existing roles to cover off on the requirement to fill executive positions. To that end, I agreed to take on the role of President, although at the time was hopeful this might only be an interim position. The Vice-President position has remained vacant, although at this year's AGM, a motion will be put forward to elect Anthony Jones. He is currently holding the Communication's Chair, and is doing an extraordinary job of managing what is a large and demanding portfolio. Barbara Churcher agreed to switch from the co-chair of professional development to assume the responsibilities of Secretary. Since the election, Leonie Sinclair has carried the considerable burden of the Treasurer's position.

Other council members have continued to work in their various Chairs, with Eric Houghton and Jelena Djoric together holding the Chair of International Relations, and Madeleine Fogarty taking responsibility for research. Madeleine and Jelena have also been working with PACFA.

While Council members have done an extraordinary job of stepping up to manage the various tasks and responsibilities of their roles, the viability of GANZ remains somewhat tenuous, as we simply don't have the resources to do the work that needs to be done. One of the things I've long understood is the importance of these kinds of voluntary roles being sustainable. People give generously of their time and energy, typically out of a commitment to both gestalt and GANZ, but it with too much work and too little reward, it can quickly cease to be a labour of love.

In some respects, this feels the most urgent challenge facing GANZ, and while Council will continue to work through this problem, my invitation and even challenge to members, is to think about how they might support GANZ's ongoing development.

Over the next 12 months, up until the next year's AGM and Council Elections, we will continue to work on building the capability of Council and trying to ensure that people don't feel overloaded. It is our hope that with the addition of several new council members, or

the recruiting of people to support those on Council, that we might be better able to spread the workload.

The particular areas that we hope to focus on in the following year include:

- **Better Communication** – We recognize that this is an ongoing challenge, and with the more effective use of email and social media, hope that we can continue to build networks that support dialogue and engagement. As part of this we recognize that some form of regular updates or a newsletter would be ideal.
- **Professional Development** – We know that members would like to have better access to professional development options and understand that this would also help to promote Gestalt in the wider community. How best to do this remains a challenge, and while we are in a process of exploring how best to use our financial resources to support this, we are aware that we are somewhat limited by the size of our membership. Unfortunately, this currently means that we are operating at a loss. So we are caught in something of Catch-22... needing to encourage members to join, while being able to provide services that members would benefit from.
- **Conference** – The conference or Gathering, continues to be primary mechanism for building community. The organizing committee, via Gabe Phillips, will provide us with an update on how the planning going and what we can look forward too. A practical support for the conference would be for people to register sooner rather than later.
- **Journal** – Like PD, the Journal is a crucial mechanism for continuing to support the development of gestalt in our community. Alan Meara continues to do an exceptional job, and in a way similar to the struggles of Council, has to juggle competing needs with limited resources. Finding people willing to write is an ongoing and perpetual challenge. One of the things we have on our agenda is to consider ways in which GANZ could more actively support people to be writing.
- **Peer Groups** – We are keen to support the ongoing development of peer groups, and have budgeted to cover some basic expenses for these groups. Beyond that we intend to continue to support these groups through our various networks.

Whilst the above represents some of what Council is currently working with, the individual Chairs are also working to create additional opportunities. Jelena and Eric are exploring how to better engage with the International Gestalt community, while Eric has a specific focus on create opportunities for connection and engagement in New Zealand. Madeleine's commitment to research means that she continue to explore opportunities for Gestalt to build its presence and credibility through various research projects.

Alongside of these tasks, Council are engaged in the process of building a cohesive and effective leadership team. My own perspective is that people have given of their time and energy with great generosity and have stepped into the challenge of working with the limitations imposed by geographical spread, and relationships that are new. It is perhaps Gestalt's strength that we all bring a willingness to lean into process, but to bring to this meeting, a willingness to be engaged and present.

While not an opportunity I was necessarily seeking, I look forward to continuing to work with this group on behalf of the GANZ Community for the coming twelve months.

Leanne O'Shea