



VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT - GANZ AGM 2020

Dear Colleagues:

This year began with the arrival of new GANZ Council members:

- Aicha Brogan, who embraced the Community and Membership role and increased our visibility through her communications as well as managing the complex membership IT systems with grace;
- Nathan Dick, who stepped competently into the role of Treasurer, and courageously into his desire to foster inclusive and diversity;
- Annie Garrety, who brought her passion to the Research Chair, her ability to articulate vision, and her considerable efforts to developing Gestalt Peer Process Groups;
- Julia Werner, who solidly found her feet in the Secretary role and brought her willingness to speak her difference and a depth of experience about culture change; and
- Michelle Sier, who entered into the Professional Development Chair with groundedness and goodwill

Marc Moskowitz continued as our warm and steady Student Representative; Eric Houghton brought wisdom and a valuable understanding of group dynamics as the International and Aotearoa / New Zealand representative; and I continued as Vice President. The President role was vacant for the entire year.

I am pleased to report that the group has formed a cohesive and energised Council with a relatively flat power structure. The Council has demonstrated both the capacity to collaborate on tasks and attend to the relationships within the group. Prior to the COVID-19 situation emerging, the new Council chose the themes of Vitality, Integrity and Visibility for our work. We chose this theme as we wanted to bring into focus our intention to grow Gestalt Therapy in Australia and New Zealand. We put this intention into practice with two new initiatives:

- The Access to Professional Development policy, in which GANZ arranges with training providers to offer discounts for GANZ members; and
- The online Gestalt Process Peer Groups pilot, which is proving a very successful experiment, with 5 groups now running with around 35 people from the Northern Territory, Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, Aotearoa / New Zealand, Brazil and Bolivia.



Key activities that the Council continued from previous years were the Newsletter and Facebook communications, and the publication of one edition of the Gestalt Journal of Australia and New Zealand (as detailed in the Journal Editor's report). The Council members continued to work on the organisation itself, for example by developing policy to check compliance with legislative requirements, revisiting complaints procedures, and chipping away at IT systems. One complaint was received, and the complainant was referred to the appropriate regulatory body. Financially, the organisation made a small loss, as can be seen in the Treasurer's report, which I think is commendable given the year it was.

And then came the pandemic, and the upheaval has meant that some of our ambitions had to be shelved.

Very worryingly, GANZ membership continued to decline over the year, as can be seen in the membership report and now sits at 132 members, and GANZ now stands at a crossroads. Perhaps the pandemic partly contributed to this decline in membership, but in my view other factors contributed to this decline as well. GANZ as an organisation may have moved away from its old form as a regulatory body, but at least in the early part of 2020 had yet to arrive as an organisation with a clear and relevant purpose. The absence of a President, while managed by myself and the Council, has also meant that while there was no shortage of ideas, there has been a shortage of hands on deck to bring these ideas into fruition. And in my opinion, the structure of GANZ Council itself is old fashioned, with a hierarchical form that runs counter to moves in the broader field to more collaborative relationship structures. Perhaps GANZ is also sometimes burdened by some of the ghosts of conflicts in its past.

There are shifts in the broader field that significantly impact on Gestalt practitioners and GANZ too, with the shifts at PACFA, an increasingly regulated education environment, and the decrease in the number of training institutes standing out. The threats in the field to the longer term viability of Gestalt Training cannot be ignored. The pandemic also derailed plans for the next Gestalt Conference, which would have been scheduled for 2021, but has had to be postponed. GANZ is also experiencing a transition as a generation of elders step into away from being highly active in GANZ and towards their next life and career developmental stages, leaving space-yet-to-be-filled for new generation to emerge.

Despite this, interest in Gestalt Therapy remains, and there are many vibrant and skilled practitioners in Australia and Aotearoa / New Zealand. The GANZ Council has recently been focusing on developing a vision to bring to members that we believe will lead to growth. Our vision has four key focuses:



-
- To serve the community of humans - therapists, coaches, trainees, trainers, supervisors and community leaders - using Gestalt practices
 - To further the use, recognition, efficacy and validity of Gestalt practices principles and philosophy
 - To support our organisation's growth towards anti-racist radical inclusiveness in our community that acknowledges the privilege blindness in areas of race, ethnicity, wealth, education, gender, gender identification, orientation and all areas where power is inequitably presumed and acted upon.
 - To serve the goal of having Gestalt recognised validated and appreciated in the wider fields of counselling psychotherapy and social intervention.

GANZ is in unusual position of falling membership but a strong financial reserve, which was inherited from the previous incarnation of GANZ. The Council strongly believes that the time has come to spend some of this reserve, and are seriously at looking at several proposals for 2021 and beyond:

- A grant to support interested faculty staff at the four Gestalt Training Institutes to meet to discuss the teaching of Gestalt.
- A research project designed to both add to the evidence base of Gestalt Therapy and plant the seeds for engaging more people in Gestalt research
- Professional development projects (online and onsite) with the intentions of bringing international and local trainers to both the Gestalt Community and to promote Gestalt Therapy more widely
- A community consultation on the future of GANZ, and how a Gestalt Association may be structured to best serve the needs of the community and to support diversity and inclusion both within GANZ and in Gestalt Therapy more widely.

I want to be clear with members that this will result in a planned loss occurring for the next financial year. In the short term we hope that these initiatives will bring stimulation and support to the field at a time when it is very much needed, and in the longer term we hope this will build engagement and membership in GANZ. There is risk, but if GANZ does not change and memberships continue to fall then the viability of the organisation itself is at threat.

This is our vision as a Council, and we present it to you now and invite you to come with us. Let us not waste a good crisis!



Finally, as I say farewell to my time on the Council, I would like to thank my colleagues who have freely given much of their time, thoughtfulness, wisdom and effort, goodwill to GANZ. They have my respect.

Anthony Jones

14/11/2020