
Editorial

In his book *The Songlines* (1988), Bruce Chatwin describes how as a young man he awoke one morning to find himself blind. Understandably he smartly sought a medical consultation. His consultant suggested that he had been engrossed in examining paintings in fine detail for too long (he was an art expert at Sotheby's), and should take time to explore long horizons. His sight had returned by the time he reached the airport.

I read about this in Australia's Northern Territory, a place of long and broad horizons. I was clearing my head, perhaps my vision, after a period of intense focus both within my practice and in our Association as a whole. Professions call for such a focus, and psychotherapy is no exception.

Without regular contact with long horizons it is easy to become 'one-eyed', 'blind to what is important' - there are many apposite metaphors. My visit to the 'Top End' fulfilled a long-held dream. It is not the only long horizon I have touched during the past year. In supervision, at the Association's Nelson Conference, with my grandchildren, I have been called away from a myopic view.

The songlines of which Bruce Chatwin writes are physical paths of communication between far flung Aboriginal Tribes, a walk in the footprints of their ancestors. They are a physical, cultural and spiritual map communicated through song, ritual, dance and story to new generations. As one character describes it, 'providing you know the song you can always find your way across country'. Individuals in different tribes hold different parts of each songline, and the knowledge each holds is respected and shared with caution. Where it seems it will not be respected it is not shared. Yet if it is not shared the culture will die.

As a trainee psychotherapist I anxiously guarded my 'song', my passion and core values, fearful that others would tell me they were 'wrong', that their version was 'right'. I did not have a sense that psychotherapists really respected each other's ideas, or that each could have a part of the whole. I am still not sure how much of my anxiety was my own, and how much an accurate perception of how psychotherapists in New Zealand really relate to each other's understandings.

It is not easy to hold one's own 'song' lightly and confidently while listening to the apparently different song of another. When asked about a part of the songline which is outside their territory an aboriginal would say 'that's their business'.

In our inclusive Association we overtly attempt to connect with each other's understandings, each other's business, yet I know some still hold the anxiety I experienced. There is still caution in discussing one's psychotherapeutic song in case it, and oneself, will not be respected. This is evident in the tension about our admission processes. I wonder if it also underlies some branch meetings' low attendance.

The papers in this issue of Forum put before us a satisfyingly diverse range of issues. It is particularly pleasing to welcome contributions presenting the challenges and rewards of working with children. My thanks to the authors who share their part of our songline with us and so lengthen our horizons.

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