



# A Piece of my Mind

Editorial Comment

## What you can expect from *Piece*

When (if) you read this column, you'll notice that there are times when I comment on what people have written, and there are times when I don't. There are other times when I focus on meetings that I have attended, or perhaps there are just random thoughts about things that strike me as being important, funny or sometimes possibly just interesting to me. The answer to "What are you going to write about this month?" is usually "It depends". I certainly don't feel the urge to comment on every single thing in the *SAPJ*, and there are many times when I adopt a wait and see attitude – if it's important to you, you'll write to me.

That is an essential aspect of the journal. It's here to inform you, to provide material for CPD, and to give you a platform to air your views. My views are really not important in your daily life.

You are more than welcome to submit your thoughts, either as a *Letter to the editor* or as *Nibbles*. I'd appreciate it if you kept it short and concise – 300 or 400 words is appropriate for a letter, slightly more for a Nibble. It's an interesting exercise because it's so much easier to just ramble on but it takes discipline and effort to distil one's thoughts and feelings into something that's easy to read. So there's a challenge for you – please write to me, and don't be reluctant to play with your words before you submit them because you may just surprise yourself about how well it turns out!

## Dinosaur, phoenix or evolving adventure?

I've decided that I will comment on the president's column on organisational flexibility this month. It certainly made me think. It feels like a lifetime ago that Dr Humphrey Zokufa urged pharmacists to adapt their business models to accommodate the new thinking in health care and in pharmaceutical services. How successful were we? Did you do it when you were told of the way in which the future would unfold? Or did it take you unawares when you couldn't follow the old patterns? I suspect that it would surprise us if we sat down and compared the way we do things now with the way we did them ten or twenty years ago.

It feels as though we sometimes drown in the morass created by the new demands on our professional, supervisory, managerial and strategic skills. How have you coped with the changes in your practice

environment? What are you doing to prepare yourself for the impact that NHI is going to have on your practice? It may feel like it's far away, but are you using the time to analyse the old and the new? I love the term that Sarel used – strategic flexibility. It captures the concepts of critical thought as well as necessary adaptation of approach in implementation. Have you formulated strategic plans for yourself and your practice so that you will not become another redundant statistic?

## The enemy in the mirror

Life is complex, and it sometimes feels as though it's a constant battle to find a peaceful and fulfilling place in our surroundings and in ourselves. Joggie Hattingh's column exposes a problem that has haunted me for years – how the thing that irritates me in other people is often some trait in me that I haven't come to terms with or learnt how to control. It's something I recognise in other people too. The people who complain long and hard that "someone must do something" have often not done too much constructive themselves about the problem that faces them. It's dreadful to feel powerless to change something that is important to us, but whinging and whining about it doesn't solve anything, does it?

## Is it all doom and gloom?

Not at all. I know there are pharmacists out there who are doing great work and, in their quiet ways, are changing the lives of the patients for whom they are working. We don't always hear about them, though.

Next month, we're going to introduce you to a young pharmacist who is making a difference locally and internationally. Most of us don't have such a dramatic story to tell, but we are all making a difference in our own environment. It may be naïve of me, but I don't believe that any of us would survive in a service driven profession if we were not. Pharmacy is not characterised by menial repetitive actions. It's a constant challenge to find optimal solutions to our patients' healthcare issues.

I'm hoping that you are feeling confident enough, and brave enough, to write to me and tell me about your practice problems, and especially how you have dealt with them. Perhaps you'll be able to inspire someone else. You'll definitely inspire me.

**Lorraine Osman**