

## The Founding of the APS Interest Group in Coaching Psychology

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First I would like to thank David Heap and the Symposium 2008 Committee, and Peter Zarris, National Convener, for the great honour of this invitation to comment on the Founding of the IGCP at the opening of this National Symposium.

Secondly, although it is not my brief here I **do** want to say at the outset of this Symposium a very big thank you to the National IGCP Convener Peter Zarris, David Heap and the hard-working Symposium 2008 Committee ... and associated workers – especially those in Sydney ... for bringing us all to this point of *great anticipation!*

We are all volunteers in this volunteer professional interest group. It lives solely on discretionary effort and goodwill, and on shared commitment to this broader community of interest – as my friend and colleague John Alder first called it two years ago.

So David, Peter and the National and Symposium Committees I am confident I can speak on behalf of us here by saying here at the start –  
THANK YOU!

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I have been asked to share with you some reflections about the founding of this Australian Psychological Society's **Interest Group INCoaching Psychology**.

It is now 10 years since there were some important stirrings about these foundations within the APS.

- In 1998 the APS College of Organisational Psychologists (**COP**) in Victoria was actively noticing and engaging with developments in the coaching industry. That College, focused in Melbourne, then supported engagement with this emergent area of practice in organisations.
- As a direct consequence of **this initiative within the APS** and the support of COP, in a regular meeting of four APS College representatives which later became known as 'the Carlton Group' - the **four** Colleges jointly planned and executed in Victoria an all day Saturday workshop on November 13<sup>th</sup>, 1999. It was titled: 'A Dialogue About Coaching From Different Psychological Perspectives'.

Among the nine key questions addressed during the day were some that may sound familiar to us even now –

1. a) What is coaching?
  - b) What are your dominant frameworks for coaching?

- c) What is your context for coaching?
2. What theoretical background does it have?
3. What skills and / or competencies are required to implement (a coaching intent and) framework?
4. What are the key ethical issues associated with ... working as a coach in (particular) contexts?

And finally and importantly –

5. What are the implications for the APS and for cooperation between the Colleges?

At this event, the then Executive Director of the APS Alison Garton facilitated inputs from members of four colleges (Counselling, Organisational, Clinical and Educational / Developmental).

- Seventy psychologists attended and all four Colleges allocated specialist PD points to the occasion. This seems to have been the first APS sponsored event about coaching.

**The proposition to form a national interest group within the APS was then formulated in Victoria between 2000 and early 2002.** Necessary support for it was enlisted through some existing networks, including those associated with leadership coaching.

- It was Dr John Munro, a member of the Carlton Group, who at the **2001** APS National Conference in Adelaide suggested that an APS Interest Group could be the way to go.
- After undertaking organisational research ... and with assistance from National Office people like Garry Khoo and APS Board Member Dr Graham Davidson ... the actual submission to the

APS Board to form this Interest Group was despatched on the **3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2002**. A copy of this is on display in the foyer.

The submission had to be accompanied by at least twenty founding subscriber full APS members from around the nation: just one or two cities was not enough.

The APS Board endorsed this proposal at its **June 2002** meeting.

- This compressed time-line was necessary if the IGCP were to be formed at the then upcoming APS 2002 AGM that year rather than wait another 12 months.
- Accounts of these earlier APS events and initiatives have been provided in the April and August 2002 editions of the APS publication In-Psych.
- Early 'Updates' (as we called them) were widely circulated and copies of the first five of these are also in the Foyer.

Meanwhile in Sydney, also from about 1998, Tony Grant (bow) was carving out his seminal PhD thesis on the Psychology of Coaching - which submission was dated **October 2001**.

- Tony and others in Sydney were also engaging in a range of initiatives to found the Sydney University Coaching Psychology Unit.
- Other universities in the nation then were starting to explore coaching in their course offerings.

Until mid 2002 there was destined to be little communication across these Melbourne and Sydney-based tributaries that were to deeply shape this national coaching psychology stream within the APS ...

or as our National Convener Peter Zarris has recently referred to as ‘a movement’!

An important event that made a difference to this situation of relative isolation for psychologists interested in professional coaching was the first ICF Coaching Conference in Sydney in July 2002.

- This important ICF Conference on Coaching was an electrifying sell-out event. But it galvanised the thirty psychologists present to reflect on their own professional and organisational response to the events then powerfully unfolding around them.
- So at breakfast meeting of twenty eight of these psychologists at the Star City, the news was broken of the submission which had already been made to the APS Board.
- The assembled psychologists present endorsed this initiative and sought to further contribute to this emergent community of interest within the APS.
- I recall that it was at this breakfast meeting Tony first introduced Michael Cavanagh to me – Michael just having returned (again!) from overseas – an inveterate traveller!

The 2002 AGM of the Society endorsed the recommendation of the APS Board that this IGCP be formed. The original notes prepared in support of that motion are also on display in the Foyer: they “make the case” for its formation under eleven points.

Given the momentum generated, and after some further innovative organisational change consultations within the APS, the first National Committee was appointed by the APS Board in December 2002 and the committee assembled at Sydney University on the 24<sup>th</sup> January 2003.

- It got through an ambitious agenda, including adopting a roll-out program for fostering the creation of local branches across Australia that year.
- At the end of this meeting I recall the applause and the air of excitement. Something new and important has started we felt.

That 1<sup>st</sup> multi-faceted and talented National Committee directly represented practitioner and academic interests, research and ethics, was gender inclusive and experienced in many aspects of the coaching industry then existing in Australia.

Since then the original IGCP agenda scope has been continued and broadened into the international context. It has been built on and adapted by successive IGCP National Committees, and especially for the long consolidation haul under the leadership of Dr Michael Cavanagh and Jill Macnaught:

- **This is a voluntary professional association built solely on discretionary effort and a commitment to a shared community of interest.**
- Over the years many indeed have so shared their time, energy, skills and vision for the better positioning of psychology as a profession within the wider coaching industry and indeed community.

- However, I would like to make special mention of Anne Hammond. She has contributed in IGCP Office at significant state and or national levels throughout this entire 2003-2008 period. That is quite an innings Anne – thank you!

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I would like to conclude by offering some very brief personal reflections on this journey looking back ten years on.

As a new comer to the formal Profession of Psychology and APS –

like so many new-comers to any association that are desirous and jealous of its already established *professional* identity.

... I have been keen to explore *professional coaching psychology* as distinct from what passes for much in the expansive ‘coaching industry’.

- The lines seemed clear – the emergent coaching industry brought obvious business and marketing savvy;
- The psychology profession offered evidence-based learning, research methods, an existent knowledge base, an established professional ethical framework, and clear professional – client practice standards.
- I personally noted the apparent disconnect between the significant evidence-based professional leadership literatures on the one hand ... and the emergent practice and literature on coaching in organisational contexts on the other, even though much of the latter was presenting as being about leadership coaching.

- The backdrop to all this was the obviously significant growth of the coaching industry here in Australia and elsewhere – with much of it being *outside* the profession of psychology.

In seeking to respond to these organisational and professional issues –

- **I have found myself challenged to reflect deeply on my career own journey** first in science and physics, then in theology, philosophy and ethics, then in adult and secondary education and finally in organisational psychology.
- Like many on this journey ... I am sure ... I have been compelled to dig into, draw upon and then redefine the **previous vocational and professional identities** I had.
- Many of us here will have had times of deep reflection about **what resources one brings** from the past to meet present and future challenges.
- **I believe such multi-disciplinary and multi-faceted personal journeys are the crucible for innovation, new knowledge and skill, and indeed for personal and professional evolution.**

Hopefully this two day National Symposium will provide each of us with opportunities to reflect deeply on these things again at this point in time.

So now, ten years on, it is indeed wonderful to see how *the lit torch* has been passed around, handed on, stoked and re-stoked, and indeed redesigned several times as fundamental issues were again revisited in various ways.

- And now it is brought to this wonderful location in Sydney at Darling Harbour where it again clearly burns brightly!

**When I look at the program** assembled for this Symposium, who is contributing to it, and the great attendance here assembled ...

... I think there is good reason to say that there is a certain sense in which *“we have matured as professional psychologists as a result of this interest group in the practice of coaching”*.

**It indeed gives me much pleasure today to see five of the First IGCP National Committee of eight here presenting either major addresses or significant independently refereed workshops.**

- Thank you all for the journey which obviously still continues!
- **You have broadened my and our understanding of coaching psychology and continue to do so.** This is one of the best outcomes of genuine professional dialogue!

**Finally, I am indebted to my friend and colleague John Alder for him** supporting my own personal and professional journey and indeed for subsequently, years later, investigating the evidence about the founding history of this IGCP.

- John has trawled through the evidence about the times, circumstances and events that led to the founding of this IGCP. He has framed an interpretation of this evidence as lead author in an *article* that is being launched today which he has called –

‘Establishing a community of interest: The founding of the APS  
Interest Group in Coaching Psychology 1998 – 2002.

I now invite John to step up for a couple of minutes to provide some  
commentary about this piece concerning the early founding period. As for  
the detail you will be able to read it for yourself in the article!

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Thank you John. I guess we can now consider this particular commentary  
on the early period of the IGCP to be launched. No doubt there will be  
others and hopefully further additions along the way!

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