

The fork in the road

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THE DIFFERENT CORE IDEOLOGIES OF THE GUILD AND PSA DISCOURAGE HARMONY OF PURPOSE.

When Britain elected its new government earlier this year it turned out a bit of a mixed result. Not surprisingly, there is much debate on just how functional the new coalition between the conservatives and the liberal-democrats will ultimately be. Might there be similarities to the political dynamics of Australian pharmacy?

At the centre of British concern about the new blended government is the fact that the core ideologies (which underpin 'purposes'), of the new partners are so different. Commentators have made observations that their beliefs are '...like oil and water, eventually there will be problems.'

At first pass, it is tempting to assume that differences in core ideology between people or organisations can be managed simply by applying mature behaviours such as dignified acceptance of the other's position. However, when ideologies differ, human experience shows that dignified acceptance and mutual respect become very heavy burdens indeed when: (a) there is requirement to work continuously together over time, and (b) the resources which support each side are both common and limited.

For the new British coalition government, both (a) and (b) certainly apply. The American business consultant and author, Jim Collins, and Stanford University

The PSA Way The Guild Way



The Strategy and Innovation Road for community pharmacy

professor, Jerry Porras, clearly articulate this connection between core ideology and envisioned future in their *Harvard Business Review* article from 1996, titled 'Building your company's vision'. Collins and Porras posit that the core ideology and envisioned future are the two intertwined components which together produce an organisation's vision. Core ideology is seen as the 'Yin', while envisioned future is the 'Yang'. Different ideology begets a different future.

I believe we are observing another demonstration of difference in core ideology and envisioned future when we look at how the Pharmacy Guild of Australia and Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) have been 'relating' lately. The differences have been clearly displayed as each sought to influence the outcome of the Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement. PSA president Warwick Plunkett

is quoted in several press sources expressing his disillusionment with the PSA's 'exclusion' (by the Guild), from the negotiation process, despite an agreement to the contrary.

The apparent exclusion then caused the PSA to go to the government to lobby directly at the last minute, to try to reverse cuts to the professional service programs, a result of the earlier Guild/Government deal. As Plunkett states in his *Australian Pharmacist* editorial in March: '...the contents of the draft Agreement demonstrates the stark contrast and differences in the priorities for community pharmacy between the Guild and the PSA.'

Uncomfortable spats between the Guild and the PSA are not new. However, I believe that this disagreement is more significant and signals a new and permanent departure from their previous bumpy-but-workable-collaboration of the past. The fundamental differences in their core ideologies are now being greatly accentuated by the fact that financial resources are being squeezed like never before.

The core ideology of each organisation is reflected in their constitutions. Under the heading 'Objects' in the Guild's constitution is the following short and sweet statement of purpose:

- 'The objects of the Guild shall be:
- a. to represent the interests of members in industrial matters;**
 - b. to further and protect the interests of and generally to do anything which may be considered beneficial for its members.'**

The PSA statement of purpose in their constitution is too long to reproduce in its entirety here, but it starts with:

'The objectives (are to) develop and implement policies and strategies to: **(a) articulate and facilitate the most effective role for pharmacists and the practice of pharmacy within the Australian health care system.'**

It goes on to list a broad range of other 'objects' including issues surrounding ethics, professional standards, and so on, and finishes: '**...and to protect and further the interests of, and generally do anything which may be considered beneficial for its members.'**

The behaviours they have each exhibited in the influencing of the Fifth Agreement outcomes seem to be quite consistent with the core ideology of each organisation. The Guild has attempted to protect the interests of its members, the owners; and the PSA has done the same for its members. If there is a problem, it lies in the common assumption by the rest of us that both organisations are batting for exactly the same team. Quite rightly they're not!

Both organisations are vital for the success and growth of the broad church which is our profession. Both are capable of making an extraordinary difference. Long may they both reign. But Australian pharmacists must now consider which 'envisioned future' is best for them, then support the organisation which is most dedicated to delivering that future. The days of ample resources which kept everybody happy are apparently over. ■