

Official Opening: 44th Australian Psychological Society Annual Conference
SPEECH by His Honour Mr Tom Pauling AO QC
Administrator of the Northern Territory
Darwin Convention Centre – 30 September 2009

It is my great pleasure as Administrator of the Northern Territory to welcome you all today, especially those of you who have not enjoyed the opportunity to visit us before. In 2008, your conference was held in a chilly Tasmania, four thousand kilometres and more south of us. To put it in perspective – the same distance as a trip on the Orient Express from London to Istanbul, but all in our one amazing country.

My early years were spent in Sydney and when I was a small child, my family were close friends with a family called the Clarks. The patriarch was Professor John Faithfull Clark, Foundation Professor of Applied Psychology at New South Wales University and considered by many the father of the discipline of psychology.

My father, Thomas Percival Pauling, studied with Professor Clark and went on to be a highly valued Personnel Manager, or as they are now called, HR Manager, firstly with Bradford Cotton Mills and later with Philips International Industries. At Philips, Pauling senior was the first Australian in management to be received into the inner circle of this very Dutch company.

In the course of his job he would apply the 16PF psychology test to those seeking employment. First published in 1949 by Raymond Cattell, this questionnaire assesses sixteen personality factors. When we were at High School, my sister and I spent many evenings not only completing homework but also marking these tests - it was not long before patterns were obvious. I wonder if it was the genesis of my sister's career.

My sister, Sue Hawick, became a significant school counsellor, leading the Australian Guidance and Counselling Association for many years. She was Project Manager of the MindMatters Plus Initiative aimed at health promotion, prevention and early intervention for all secondary students and also contributed to international conferences - including one in Malta just two months ago.

From the era when my father became qualified in aspects of psychology to today, there has been a quantum leap. Not only has psychology been accepted as a science, it has also seen significant acceptance as a therapeutic mechanism to control behaviour. So much so that despite early scepticism, Focussed Psychological Strategies and Psychological Therapy, provided by clinical psychologists, are recognised aspects of Medicare and of the Better Outcomes in Mental Health Care Program.

The history of the Northern Territory has challenged many. It is a history of exploration matched with resilience, a case of man and woman versus a vast, uncompromising landscape. The first Australians were scattered across the land in a mosaic of different languages and clans. From the coast of Arnhemland to the central desert, they understood the fundamentals of changing seasons and adjusted to each day's conditions.

The early settlers, however, had immense adjustments to make. Mounted policemen and their long suffering wives, usually posted from South Australia; stockmen and founders of the cattle stations, seeking new pastures. They all had to adjust to temperatures and conditions completely outside their experience.

And there are still many who suffer from "tyranny of distance" and find themselves outside the modern understanding of comfort zone. Young army wives, for example, who have to manage here whilst husbands and partners are deployed overseas and who, despite the support networks, find the "Build Up" heat oppressive and miss the warmth of family support. Patients at our hospitals, and sadly within our dialysis centres, who are far from homelands and familiarity.

I am sure that a psychologist somewhere has studied the subject of Comfort Zones. The history of the Northern Territory has relied on those who adapted, despite the many foreign elements they confronted in their daily lives. As your guest from Manchester can no doubt affirm, in Britain it is generally agreed that optimum conditions for the literal understanding of comfort zone are fifteen degrees centigrade and 60% relative humidity – not on offer here in the dramatic wet season.

The first Australians were at one with the land a century ago but today, in the Northern Territory, there are some mental health issues that beggar belief especially within the indigenous community. If you have not yet seen the Palme d'or Cannes Film Festival winner *Samson and Delilah* then do so as soon as you can. It will provide insights not possible to convey in general discussion. I can personally attest to the accuracy of the film.

In conclusion, I think back to a time when as a young lawyer I read two books about the allied science of psychiatry. Allied that is to psychology, not law. The first was Laing, Esterson and Cooper's *Sanity, Madness and the Family*. The second was Dr Esterson's detail of the first publication in a case study into the dialectics of madness entitled *The Leaves of Spring*. It has always haunted me. A young woman was locked up and labelled a schizophrenic. This, because she was said to madly believe that her mail was intercepted, her phone calls listened to and that her parents were fraudulently dealing with company monies. In fact all three were true and she suffered terribly.

In interpreting the psychological make up of clients before you, there must be a point at which you evaluate what is real and what is fantasy. I would never suggest that it is easy. But I do suggest that we should always be very careful about applying convenient labels.

In fact, I would remind you of the ancient Greeks. Hippocrates had the idea that four body fluids, or humours, governed our health. And then the Greek physician Galen suggested that humours influenced not only health but also our personalities: People with an excess of yellow bile were therefore choleric (hot tempered), those with too much phlegm were phlegmatic (calm and unemotional), an excess of blood resulted in a sanguine personality (optimistic and cheerful) and black bile was associated with melancholic types (gloomy and depressed). You may remember the melancholy Jaques in *As You Like It*.

So, in the very best sanguine good humour - the result of enjoying the very best of the Northern Territory for the past forty years - I wish you well with your deliberations and now declare the 44th Australian Psychological Society Annual Conference officially open.