I migrated from the UK to Australia in 1979 and joined the APS shortly after my arrival. In the early 1980s, I took on a number of roles with the Australian Behaviour Modification Association (ABMA), culminating in becoming National President in 1984/1985. These activities resulted in a profile that led to requests to take on APS roles. Initially I declined as I believed that holding positions with two professional associations concurrently would result in not doing justice to any of the roles. After finishing my term as President of ABMA, I started to accept APS positions that involved relatively small commitments such as memberships of the National Executive of the Board of Clinical Psychologists, a Working Party on Health Psychology, and the Publications Committee. In 1995, I took on my first more substantial role as Chair of the 30th Annual Conference. This led to me standing for the Board as Director of Scientific Affairs, a position I held from 1997 to 2000. In 2000, I nominated for the Presidency of the Society, and remained in this office until 2004. Of course, being on the Board, particularly in the position of President, resulted in membership of numerous committees and working/advisory groups. Since completing my second term as President, I have continued in some APS roles, such as President of the 27th International Congress of Applied Psychology, and membership of the Governance Review, Standing Committee on International Relations, and Education and Training Reference Group.

So why did I take on all these, mostly unpaid, roles? As a career academic, I had often heard APS office bearers referred to in less than flattering terms. A senior colleague at the University of Western Australia always referred to them as ‘APS apparatchiks’, which the dictionary defines as ‘a Russian colloquial term for a full-time, professional functionary of the Communist Party or government’! The rewards in universities largely come from being a productive researcher, and research is about momentum – the more grants you get, the more papers you can publish, which leads to more grants, etc. Being on the Board of APS hinders this process and being President is a ‘killer’, as testified by the drop in my grants and publications through this period. By far the majority of the members are extremely supportive of the work that you do, but just a few are ‘snaky’.

Having said that, I believe that APS has given me much more than I have given the Society. No one twisted my arm to do these jobs - I either pursued them, or at least accepted them willingly. It was a great honour and a privilege to be President for four years, an experience that I wrote about in In-Psych (Martin, 2004). The best thing about the roles is the opportunities they provide for creating change. The APS is the peak body for psychology in Australia and hence one can progress initiatives for the profession and discipline of psychology that cannot be pursued in any other way. APS roles provide learning opportunities as many of the tasks that one takes on are different from anything one has done before. Other advantages include the opportunity to meet people – psychologists from all the different corners of our profession on the one hand, and the politicians and bureaucrats who control our fate on the other. Through my APS roles I have met so many special people and the thing
I missed most after completing seven years on the Board was the comradeship of the other Directors and the staff of the APS National Office.