



**A Feminine Perspective on The Disillusioned Leader, By Amanda Sinclair (Allen & Unwin 2007)**  
**Review by Barbara Etter (Assistant Commissioner of WA Police)**

*Professor Amanda Sinclair's recent book, 'The Disillusioned Leader' has certainly created much discussion on leaders and leadership. Her recent presentation to Western Australian leaders prompted much debate amongst attendees. Another of our readers has been inspired to share her reflections after reading Amanda's book.*

Following on from the review provided by Jeff Stone of the Leadership Centre in the first edition of *Reflective Leaders*, I felt compelled to provide further comment on a book which really hit a chord with me. After starting to read the book, I simply had to continue because I could associate with so much of what Amanda was saying. I found myself thinking "Yes!!" "Yes!!, over and over again.

It really is so refreshing to read an author that tells it like it is and, even though a highly respected academic, Amanda is clearly not immersed in, and blinded by, leadership theory and research. Nor is she enamoured with the widely acclaimed male "Captains of Industry". It is great to see someone take to task the status quo and provide a more realistic and appealing model of leadership, particularly from a female perspective.

I really enjoyed her comments about not having to have that great "vision" for the future. Amanda instead stresses the importance of the actual leadership journey. It is not the destination that counts. To paraphrase her comments, leaders need to recognise the importance of that which is unanticipated. They need to be very mindful of the present. They also need to adapt along the way, be more flexible and spontaneous in their approach, and show greater respect for followers. She refers to Gandhi who pointed out that the precise shape of transformation is more likely to be shaped by collective effort. There is something very appealing about this approach.

Amanda points out that leaders had to be acutely aware of power relations and their own power. They need to commit to using power and authority ethically, rather than for competitive self-interest or as a way to control others. Working on a day to day basis in a highly disciplined and hierarchical organisation, I too believe that leadership needs to become more liberating and motivating.

I support Amanda's approach to improving our leadership thinking by being reflective, working experientially, and thinking critically. I am equally attracted by her suggestion of resisting or subverting autocratic authority (where appropriate, of course!). Amanda argues that we should seek to lead differently and lead with less ego. Leadership should rather be about a process of critical and compassionate engagement with the world. It should be about enhanced personal self-awareness and mindfulness towards others.

Her ideas do indeed provide an alternative way to lead and reinforce the need for different styles of leadership that challenge our masculine stereotypes and fly in the face of tradition. As Amanda suggests, it is a great book for those of us who have been disillusioned by some of our encounters with leaders and leadership.