



Psychotherapy & Counselling  
Federation of Australia

# FACT SHEET

## About PACFA

The Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA) is a leading peak body for counselling and psychotherapy in Australia. Our mission is to represent the profession to communities and government, and to develop the evidence-base for the effectiveness of counselling and psychotherapy.

PACFA promotes the development of the practice of counselling and psychotherapy. We foster professional identity for practitioners and ensure accountability through our regulatory functions.

PACFA has formed a partnership with the other peak body for the counselling and psychotherapy profession, the Australian Counselling Association (ACA). Together, we have established the Australian Register of Counsellors and Psychotherapists (ARCAP), a National Register of qualified practitioners.

## About Counselling & Psychotherapy

Counselling and psychotherapy aim to:

- Prevent mental illness
- Promote mental health and wellbeing
- Provide psychotherapeutic interventions for psychological difficulties such as depression, anxiety, trauma, drug and alcohol abuse, eating disorders
- Support individuals and families with life's challenges such as relationship difficulties, family violence, chronic illness, disability, bereavement, bullying, discrimination, homelessness, sexual assault, natural disasters

We utilise an interpersonal relationship to support people to explore and resolve their difficulties and make changes in their lives. There is a large body of evidence that counselling and psychotherapy are effective.

Counselling and psychotherapy are interdisciplinary activities provided by a range of health professionals including psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists, nurses, doctors, psychiatrists, counsellors and psychotherapists.



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## **We are a self-regulating profession**

The Federal Government has determined that counsellors and psychotherapists pose a low risk to the community. We are therefore required to be a *self-regulating* profession. This means that, like many other self-regulating health professions such as social work, we are not regulated by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA).

AHPRA regulation is required by government for a range of health professions that are considered to pose more significant risks to the community, such as doctors, nurses, psychologists, osteopaths and chiropractors. It is the risks to the community that warrant government regulation.

AHPRA regulation does not determine whether a particular health profession is qualified to deliver particular health services. For example, social workers are also a self-regulating profession and they are recognised to deliver mental health services under Medicare.

PACFA provides self-regulatory functions for the counselling and psychotherapy profession through:

- The PACFA National Register of qualified practitioners which is part of the Australian Register of Counsellors & Psychotherapists (ARCAP)
- Training standards for the profession
- Annual supervision and professional development requirements
- Insurance requirements
- Code of Ethics for counsellors and psychotherapists
- Complaints handling processes

In addition to having robust processes for self-regulation, all self-regulating health professions are subject to the new "code-regulation regime" which is being implemented in all States and Territories.

This involves a National Code of Conduct, the purpose of which is to protect the public by setting minimum standards of conduct and practice for self-regulating health professions. It also enables disciplinary action to be taken and prohibition orders issued in circumstances where a practitioner poses a risk to public health and safety.