



Psychotherapy & Counselling  
Federation of Australia

# PACFA

# Organisational Structure Document

(Revised 2016)

## Aim of Document

The Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA) has developed the PACFA Organisational Structure Document to inform new PACFA members, members of PACFA's Member Associations, Branches and Colleges, employees, Council delegates, and Board and Committee members, of how PACFA operates, and the relationships between the various parts of PACFA.

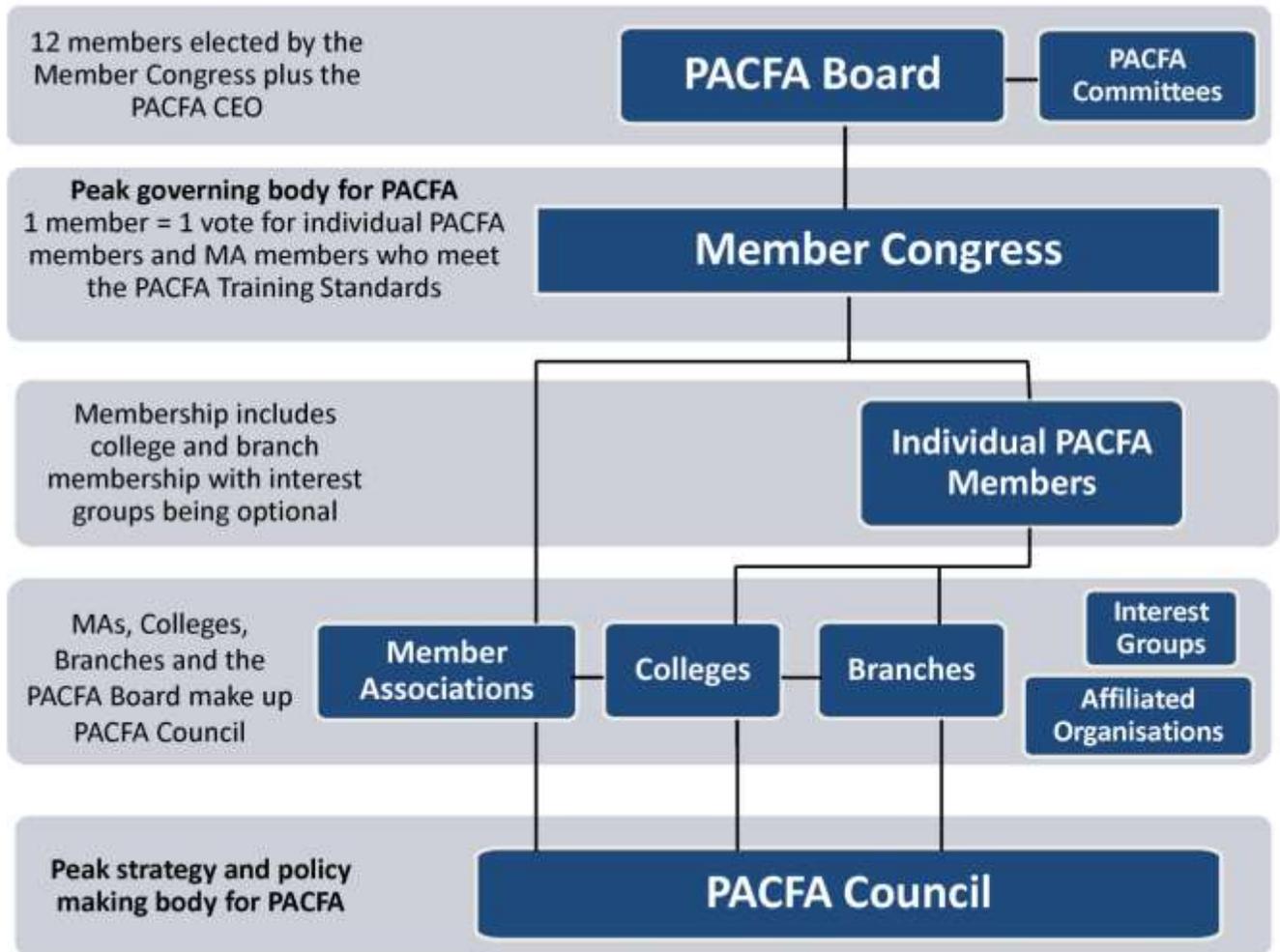
The rationale for the PACFA Organisational Structure Document is to:

- ❖ Provide an easy-to-understand overview of the organisational structure of PACFA and the relationships between the various parts of the structure:
  - Member Congress
  - Council
  - Board
  - Standing and ad hoc Committees
  - PACFA Office
  - Member Associations
  - Colleges
  - Branches
  - Interest Groups
  - Affiliated Organisations.
- ❖ Outline the Constitutional basis and roles of these constituent elements of PACFA;
- ❖ Provide information on PACFA's Self-Regulation model for the profession of counselling and psychotherapy.

## Changes to PACFA's Organisational Structure in 2015

- ❖ PACFA was originally formed as a federation of Member Associations which represented various elements of the counselling and psychotherapy profession.
- ❖ The PACFA Council was made up of two delegates from each Member Association. The PACFA Board and Committees were elected by the delegates at PACFA Annual General Meetings.
- ❖ The organisational structure of PACFA changed in 2015 to allow individual membership, in order to grow the membership base of PACFA and more effectively represent the profession.
- ❖ The Constitution has been revised to facilitate the establishment of new PACFA Colleges, Branches and Interest Groups.
- ❖ Some former Member Associations have elected to become structurally part of PACFA. Their former members are now individual members of PACFA.
- ❖ Other Member Associations have elected to continue as separate organisations in the federated structure.
- ❖ The Member Congress now has the responsibility for governance business conducted at General Meetings, including electing six Board members at PACFA's Annual General Meetings.
- ❖ The PACFA Council has responsibility for setting PACFA's policy and strategic directions. The Council is responsible for electing Committee members and Committee Chairs at PACFA Council meetings.

PACFA's Organisational Structure 2016



## PACFA's Committee Structure

### PACFA Research Committee



### PACFA Professional Committees



## PACFA's Mission

- ❖ The Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia is a national 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 relating to the art and practice of counselling and psychotherapy.
- ❖ PACFA promotes the development of the practice of counselling and psychotherapy, and respects and supports the diversity of approaches within the profession.
- ❖ PACFA provides a united forum for counselling and psychotherapy associations and individual members.
- ❖ PACFA aims to foster the professional identity of practitioners, support research and training, and ensure public accountability of practitioners to consumers, the public and government.

## PACFA's Values

- ❖ Integrity and honesty
- ❖ Respect
- ❖ Rigour and accuracy
- ❖ Consultative decision making
- ❖ Transparency
- ❖ Accountability
- ❖ Diversity and inclusivity
- ❖ Empowerment
- ❖ Reflective and relational practice

## PACFA's Activities

PACFA aspires to achieve its mission through:

### ❖ Regulation of the Profession

- Maintain and regularly review appropriate professional training standards for counselling and psychotherapy education, aligned with the needs of practitioners, employers, consumers and carers
- Accredite counselling and psychotherapy training programs to ensure:
  - PACFA's Training Standards are met
  - Prospective students can readily identify trainings that meet the PACFA Training Standards
- Maintain a National Register of qualified and accredited practitioners
- Provide robust independent avenues for complaint handling for clients and members of the public.

### ❖ Research and Advocacy

- Undertake and disseminate high quality research and guidelines for evidence-based practice to advance the practice of psychotherapy and counselling.
- Advocate on behalf of the counselling and psychotherapy profession to government and the community for professional recognition
- Advocate to improve access to counselling and psychotherapy services for members of the Australian Community
- Disseminate information to the community on the benefits and unique contribution of counselling and psychotherapy

### ❖ Member Services

- Provide a range of services to support members including:
  - Automatic registration with PACFA and ARCAP for eligible practitioners
  - Options for membership of PACFA Colleges, Branches and Interest Groups
  - Access to affordable CPD events, conferences and professional networking opportunities at preferential member rates
  - Access to professional journals at preferential member rates
  - Access to insurance at preferential member rates
  - Access to PACFA marketing brochures (for eligible practitioners)

- Participation in PACFA’s Member Congress and Council for eligible members
  
- ❖ **Education**
  - Contribute to the development and promotion of ethical practice and professional training standards
  - Promote the need for continuing professional development (CPD) for psychotherapy and counselling practitioners and provide quality CPD opportunities and conferences
  - Provide information and education for consumers and carers about psychotherapy and counselling services
  - Liaise with relevant national and international organisations.
  
- ❖ **Good Governance**
  - Promote good governance and professional leadership in PACFA and our Member Associations, Branches and Colleges
  - Provide stewardship and trusteeship of funds and resources on behalf of PACFA’s stakeholders
  - Fulfil the Australian Government’s requirements of health promotion charities.

## Roles within the PACFA structure

### ❖ PACFA Member Congress

The Member Congress is the representative body of eligible members who meet at General Meetings, including the Annual General Meetings and have voting rights. The Member Congress is a forum to inform and consult members on key issues. Refer to Sections 5, 21 and 24 of the Constitution and relevant by-laws.

- Members of the Member Congress must meet the PACFA Training Standards and be individual members of PACFA or members of Member Associations for whom a per capita fee is paid.
- All members must be of good repute and professional standing.
- Board Members and Committee Chairs also vote at the Member Congress.
- The Member Congress receives the annual Financial Statements, appoints PACFA’s auditors, elects six key members of the PACFA Board, approves Constitutional changes and may repeal by-laws set by the Board.

# PACFA Organisational Structure Document (Revised 2016)

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- In Board elections, the Member Congress considers the capacity of the nominee, representation of the diversity of psychotherapy and counselling, and geographical representation.

## ❖ PACFA Council

The PACFA Council is responsible for the overall strategic and policy affairs of PACFA, and guiding the implementation of the Objects of PACFA. The Council operates by consensus as far as possible. The Council establishes and maintains Colleges and Branches, and may establish standing and ad-hoc committees. Refer to Sections 2, 10 and 20 of the Constitution and relevant by-laws.

- 'Council' refers to the meeting of Delegates of Member Associations, Colleges and Branches, the PACFA Board, Committee Chairs and the CEO.
- Council is responsible for setting the criteria for training and ethical standards, setting membership and renewal requirements for individual members, admitting applicant associations to PACFA and expelling MAs from PACFA.
  - Council may delegate its powers to the Board and committees.
  - Delegates to Council may attend Council Meetings held bi-annually

## ❖ Role of Delegates to PACFA Council

Delegates are appointed by Member Associations, Colleges and Branches. The liaison role of delegates between PACFA and MAs, Colleges and Branches is crucial to the success of PACFA as a peak body, and is mutually beneficial. Refer to Section 5 of the Constitution and relevant by-laws.

- MAs, Colleges and Branches appoint two members as delegates to the PACFA Council. It is highly desirable that at least one of the two Delegates is a member of the MA Executive or College/Branch Leadership Group.
- Members of the PACFA Board and Committee Chairs are also PACFA Delegates.
- Delegates must be of good repute and professional standing.
- Delegates will represent the views, concerns and aspirations of their MAs, Colleges and Branches.
- Delegates will represent the views and decisions of the PACFA Council to their MAs, Colleges and Branches.
  - Delegates do not have a formal role in representing PACFA to external bodies.

## ❖ PACFA Colleges

PACFA Colleges provide a unique professional focus for individual PACFA members and members of PACFA Member Associations, and aim to advance their members' interests. Members must meet College standards of admission. Refer to Section 21 of the Constitution and relevant by-laws.

There are four PACFA Colleges:

- Australian College of Counselling and Psychotherapy Educators
- College of Relationship Counsellors
- College of Counselling
- College of Psychotherapy (incorporates the Somatic Psychotherapy modality and various other modalities covered by PACFA Member Associations)

PACFA Colleges are led by a Leadership Group elected from the College membership by College members.

PACFA Colleges may:

- Develop multiple sub-divisions to represent therapy modalities or professional interests within the College
- Develop and promote practice standards and guidelines
- Sponsor and foster research relevant to the College
- Promote the work and professional identity of members who meet the College's admission standards
- Provide continuing professional development
- Provide opportunities for networking and peer support
- Produce journals and other professional resources.

## ❖ PACFA Branches

PACFA Branches provide a regional presence for PACFA members. Branch membership is open to all individual members of PACFA in the State or Territory. More than one Branch may be established in a particular State or Territory on the basis of need for support of individual members. Refer to Section 21 of the Constitution and relevant by-laws.

PACFA Branches are led by a Leadership Group elected from the Branch membership by Branch members.

PACFA Branches may:

- Undertake local outreach
- Provide continuing professional development
- Provide opportunities for networking and peer support
- Promote PACFA and the profession to local counselling and psychotherapy providers and students
- Build a vibrant community of practitioners in their state/territory
- Provide opportunities for practitioners in regional and rural areas to participate in professional development and networking.

## ❖ PACFA Member Associations

Member Associations are professional associations for counselling and psychotherapy that meet PACFA's rigorous standards for training and ethical practice.

- MAs are full voting members of PACFA with representation on the PACFA Council.
- The voice and votes of MAs on the PACFA Council are equal to those of PACFA Colleges and Branches.
- Individual members of MAs who meet the PACFA Training Standards (and for whom a per capita fee is paid by the MA) also have an equal voice and vote on the PACFA Member Congress.

## ❖ Affiliated Organisations

Affiliated Organisations are organisational members of PACFA. It includes a wide range of organisations that wish to be affiliated with PACFA.

- Affiliated organisations is a non-voting membership category.
- They may send an observer to participate in PACFA Council meetings.

## ❖ PACFA Interest Groups

Interest Groups are informal groups of members approved by the PACFA Board (a minimum of 10 members is required) which collaborate to explore aspects of practice and to provide networking and support opportunities. Interest groups that are well-developed and active over a sustained period may apply to Council to form a College. Refer to Section 21 of the Constitution and relevant by-laws.

- PACFA Interest Groups are led by a Leadership Group appointed by the PACFA Board.
- They may send an observer to participate in PACFA Council meetings.

Interest Groups may form around some of the following interests:

- Modalities, interventions, client groups or work settings
- Social policy issues that affect or arise in practice
- Professional standards in areas of shared interest

### ❖ **Role of the PACFA Board**

The Board develops and implements strategy and policy in consultation with the Council, and is accountable to the Member Congress. The Board is responsible for the governance of PACFA, and manages the business and affairs of PACFA. Refer to Sections 10, 11 and 19 of the Constitution.

- The Board employs staff to carry out the Objects of PACFA and assist with the management of PACFA.
- The Board may suspend or expel members in any membership category, and suspend Membership Associations, on the grounds set out in Section 10 of the Constitution.
- The Board oversees the key developments, recommendations, decisions and documents produced within each portfolio.
- The Board approves the budget and financial reports.
- The Board determines policies and procedures, and makes, repeals and amends by-laws.
- The Board sets dates and provides the Chair for Council, Member Congress, General and Special General Meetings.
- The Board makes clear, minuted decisions at meetings - who, what, where and when - and circulates meeting minutes to individual members, Member

Associations, Colleges and Branches.

- Membership of the PACFA Board is made up of the following positions:
  - President
  - Immediate Past President (ex officio)
  - Vice President
  - Secretary
  - Treasurer
  - Chair of Professional Practice Committee (appointed by the Board from the chairs of the Professional Practice Committees or other qualified person)
  - Chair of Research Committee (a qualified person appointed by the Board)
  - Counselling Representative
  - Psychotherapy Representative
  - Two expert members (appointed by the Board)
  - PACFA CEO (ex-officio).

## ❖ **Role of PACFA Executive Committee**

The Executive Committee (Executive) is a sub-committee of the Board. The Executive acts on matters needing immediate attention between Board meetings and has carriage of Board decisions.

- The Executive meets by teleconference at least once between Board meetings
- The Executive has ongoing organisational management including:
  - Responsibilities as an employer and oversight of matters in the Office
  - Attendance to external relationships such as government and partners in joint projects
  - Administrative management of funding proposals and agreements
  - Assessment of timeframes
  - Oversight of all finances and grants, risk and audit needs that the Board needs to deal with, in collaboration with other relevant committees
  - Ensures grant funds are expended according to grant conditions.
- Where there are agenda items that concern the portfolio of a subcommittee of the Board, the relevant Chair will be included in the process via consultation or invitation to attend an Executive meeting.

## ❖ **Role of PACFA CEO**

# PACFA Organisational Structure Document (Revised 2016)

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The CEO works in partnership with the Board, Committees, Office, MAs, Colleges and Branches to implement the strategic objectives of PACFA. The CEO provides oversight of the Operations Manager and Accountant to ensure the PACFA Office functions in a professional, efficient and collegial manner.

The CEO:

- Clearly communicates with the Board on the CEO's areas of responsibility via written and verbal reports to ensure accountability and good governance.
- Provides Executive support to the President, the Executive Committee and Committee Chairs, as required so that all areas of PACFA operate efficiently.
- Undertakes policy analysis and development of briefing papers in a range of areas including mental health, health workforce planning, health service provision and other areas relevant to Counselling and Psychotherapy, in consultation with the Board and stakeholders.
- Is responsible for PACFA communications and marketing, including acting as the editor of PACFA eNews, overseeing its timely production and ensuring that all content is consistent with the aims of PACFA and is of good quality.
- Oversees the financial management of PACFA, together with the Accountant.
- Develops submissions for alternative funding and grant applications in partnership with the Board and its committees.
- Ensures that the operation of PACFA and the PACFA Office comply with good corporate governance and relevant legislation and regulations, including Occupational Health and Safety legislation and the PACFA OH&S Policy.
- Reviews and develops PACFA policies in consultation with the PACFA Board and PACFA's diverse stakeholders.

## ❖ **Role of PACFA Professional Practice Committee**

The Professional Practice Committee oversees the of PACFA's professional practice sub-committees and provides representation for these committees on the PACFA Board. Refer to Section 23 of the Constitution and relevant by-laws.

The sub-committees of the Professional Practice Committee are:

- Professional Standards
- Ethics

# PACFA Organisational Structure Document (Revised 2016)

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- Education Program Accreditation
- Professional Development

The Professional Practice Committee:

- Provides leadership in developing standards for counselling and psychotherapy
- Supports recognition of the profession of psychotherapy and counselling by developing, maintaining and reviewing professional standards
- Seeks support and mentoring from international bodies with experience in these areas, as well as contributing to international bodies
- Provides leadership and management of matters of concerns shared across the Professional Practice sub-committees
- Develops and document policy and resource materials
- Resources the PACFA Board, Member Congress, Council, Member Associations, Colleges and Branches on professional practice, training and ethical standards.

## ❖ Role of PACFA Research Committee

The Research Committee oversees and ensures the implementation of PACFA's research agenda. Refer to Section 23 of the Constitution.

The Research Committee:

- Collaboratively develops PACFA's research agenda with Council, the Board and other senior counselling and psychotherapy researchers
- Provides resourcing, along with other experts as necessary, to counselling and psychotherapy researchers
- Monitors and ensures accountability for the ongoing implementation of funded research projects to develop the evidence-base of counselling and psychotherapy
- Reports to the Member Congress, Council and the Board on matters of research
- Provides approval for publication, dissemination and distribution of all PACFA research materials, including documents placed on the PACFA website.

## ❖ Role of the PACFA Office

# PACFA Organisational Structure Document (Revised 2016)

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The PACFA Office has the role of operational implementation and administration for PACFA's activities. The Office includes the following positions:

- Chief Executive Officer
- Operations Manager
- Accountant
- Information Services Coordinator
- Professional Practice Administrator
- Membership Officer
- Professional Development Officer
- Administrative Assistant

## ❖ **Role of Standing and Ad-Hoc Committees and Working Parties**

Standing and other Ad Hoc Committees of the Board and Council relate to Section 31 of the Constitution.

- The Board and Council can establish standing and ad hoc committees for a specific purpose to advance the Objects of PACFA
- Terms of Reference are established for each Committee and approved by the PACFA Board.
- Each Committee is accountable to the PACFA Board and PACFA Council through PACFA's reporting processes.

## **PACFA Self-Regulatory Model for Psychotherapy and Counselling Professions in Australia**

PACFA is a self-regulating professional peak body comprising member associations (MAs) for counselling and psychotherapy in Australia and individual members. The MAs represent several thousand practitioners and many different modalities. From its inception, PACFA has been involved in a consultative process to set rigorous professional standards for training counsellors and psychotherapists, ethical practice of practitioners, trainers and supervisors and governance of member associations. PACFA has established and maintains a National Register for practitioners.

Self-regulation is the most appropriate model of regulation for the counselling and

psychotherapy professions in Australia. Self-regulation generally involves the formation of a professional incorporated body or association with voluntary membership, supported by voluntary standards and codes of practice, and a recognised and accredited body of knowledge (Bensoussan & Myers, 1996). It is the recommended regulatory structure when the implications of non-compliance with its standards of practice by members of a profession are not catastrophic (DHS, 2003). The effectiveness of self-regulation relies on voluntary compliance by members of the group and works best when there are sufficient 'sanctions within the industry to require compliance' (DHS, 2003).

Some counsellors and psychotherapists are already registered as psychiatrists, psychologists, medical practitioners, nurses, etc., and are therefore subject to statutory regulation. The majority of counselling and psychotherapy practitioners, however, are not subject to statutory registration requirements in any state or territory and there are no barriers to entry to the profession. Law does not restrict use of the titles 'counsellor' and 'psychotherapist', and practitioners using these titles have varied levels and types of training and expertise. The range of therapeutic activities incorporated within these practice definitions is broad. In the wider field, the potential range of practice standards and level and quality of training is even greater.

One of the main purposes of self-regulation is to provide greater protection for the public through professional consensus about required standards of training and practice. To achieve this aim, it is necessary that the self-regulation process encompasses the whole field, rather than having factions with considerable differences in structure, process and terminology, each making competing claims. Such a situation makes it much more difficult for the public to be able to make informed choices.

### **PACFA National Register**

There are a number of core functions a professional register should perform:

- ❖ Registration of suitably qualified persons and/or persons meeting approved competency standards
- ❖ Investigation of complaints about the conduct, ability to practice and professional performance of Registrants
- ❖ Regulation of the standards of practice of the profession in the public interest
- ❖ Development of guidelines about appropriate standards of practice

- ❖ Collection of data on workforce issues and monitoring practice patterns
- ❖ Other functions as determined by the Board in consultation with relevant bodies (DHS, 2003).

## **Australian Register of Counsellors and Psychotherapists (ARCAP)**

PACFA has worked in collaboration with the Australian Counsellors' Association (ACA) to establish the Australian Register of Counsellors and Psychotherapists, which aims to establish a national register and credentialing system to regulate all counsellors and psychotherapists within Australia. Practitioners who are listed on the PACFA and ACA Registers are also listed on the ARCAP Register. ARCAP is a company which operates independently of PACFA and ACA, yet is accountable to these professional associations through their representation on the ARCAP Board. PACFA and ACA are equal shareholders in ARCAP.

The costs of maintaining ARCAP are paid by ACA and PACFA. The Chair of the Board is appointed based on experience and skills and needs to have:

- ❖ Sound knowledge of the counselling and psychotherapy professions;
- ❖ Good skills in chairing meetings;
- ❖ Thorough knowledge of the principles of procedural fairness and natural justice; and
- ❖ Ability in achieving consensus and resolving conflicts.

The work of Professor Margot Schofield in developing the Best Practice Self-Regulatory Model for Counselling and Psychotherapy report (2008) and the financial support of the Victorian Department of Human Services for the preparation of the report are acknowledged. The Victorian Department of Health notified PACFA on 17 September 2009 that the PACFA self-regulation model was accepted by the department, and that they would not be pursuing statutory regulation of counselling and psychotherapy.

## **Regulation through National Code of Conduct**

In 2011, the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council (AHMAC) requested a report from PACFA on the number of ethical complaints made to PACFA and its member associations for the period 2006-2011, and the outcomes of investigations of complaints (AHMAC, 2011).

# PACFA Organisational Structure Document (Revised 2016)

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PACFA reported to AHMAC that the number of ethical complaints against counsellors and psychotherapists reported to PACFA and its member associations for the period 2006 to 2011 was low, although a proportion of these were very serious.

Despite the evidence supplied by PACFA, AHMAC (2015) concluded that counsellors and psychotherapists are a risk to the public. This conclusion was based on consumer submissions to the consultation on the harm caused by unqualified counsellors.

Following the AHMAC consultation, the NSW government revised its Unregistered Health Practitioners Act in 2013 and reissued its Code of Conduct for Unregistered Health Practitioners. The government of South Australia issued a very similar Code of Conduct for Unregistered Health Practitioners in 2013. In Queensland, a new service, the Office of the Health Ombudsman, was established in 2014 to replace the former health care commission, and is empowered to accept complaints against registered and unregistered health practitioners. In these states, health care complaints against counsellors and psychotherapists can be referred to the state health care entity or health ombudsman for investigation and sanctions can be imposed (Lewis, 2015).

In 2014, AHMAC announced national consultations on a single national Code of Conduct for unregistered health practitioners to be enacted in each state and territory, combined with statutory powers to enforce the code by investigating breaches and issuing prohibition orders. In 2015, a final report was published, *A National Code of Conduct for health care workers* (AHMAC/COAG Health Council, 2015). Clearly, a generic national form of regulation will be imposed on those health professions not registered with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency. However, PACFA is concerned that the codes already in place in New South Wales and South Australia do not recognise important differences between the health professions grouped together by the legislation, and that existing means of professional self-regulation have not been recognised by government. Self-regulation or co-regulation provide greater assurance to the public by maintaining the accountability of practitioners to their profession, as well as providing a specialised response to complex ethical breaches that may arise in therapeutic relationships (Lewis, 2015).

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## PACFA Organisational Structure Document (Revised 2016)

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