



Psychotherapy and Counselling
Federation of Australia

Annual report summary 2022–2023

Providing high-quality registration and membership services for
Counsellors, Psychotherapists, and Indigenous Healing Practitioners

pacfa.org.au

October 2022 saw the end of an era with a number of long-standing Board Members reaching the end of their 6-year terms (3 x 2 years) allowable under the democratic governance principles of PACFA's Constitution. So it was with sadness that we farewelled President Dr Di Stow, College of Counselling Representative Pat Bradley, and Treasurer George Gintilas, and thank them for their committed service.

However, this period of handover also led to an influx of new energy into the Board with the elections of Maree Armansin as our Counselling Representative and Convenor of the College of Counselling, and Ernst Meyer as our Psychotherapy Representative and Convenor of the College of Psychotherapy. Other new appointments included Dr Pamela Brear as Chair of the Professional Standards Committee, Francis Kim as Treasurer, Doug Aberle as Vice-President and Bianca Stawiarski as co-convenor of

the College of Indigenous Healing Practices alongside Emeritus Professor Judy Atkinson. 2023 also saw the resignation of Dr Alexandra Bloch-Atefi as Chair of the Research Committee and the appointment of Associate Professor Cathy Bettman to that position, and the resignation of Doug Aberle as Chair of the Ethics Committee, making way for the appointment of Helen Phelan to that position.

In January 2023, we finalised our Strategic Plan for the next three

years, articulating with new clarity our mission, vision and values. These strategic elements inform our Strategic Results Areas which enable Board oversight of our operational progress towards our goals. We have rejuvenated our governance and Board induction procedures, supporting Directors to undertake Institute of Community Director training and consulting with Associations Forum as we reorient ourselves to best practice in this important area. In this, we thank our Governance Committee, led by external Chair Scott Rogan, and PACFA member Will Bonney.

This year we are particularly grateful to our volunteers who have stepped forward bringing new energy to various committees. Under the leadership of Dr Pamela Brear, the Professional Standards Committee has produced essential documentation outlining

registration and best practice. With the joint leadership of Doug Aberle and Helen Phelan, and the expert contribution of the Gender, Body, Kinship and Sexuality Interest Group, a review by the Ethics Committee of our Professional Conduct Procedures and processes is near completion, to ensure that we respond to consumer complaints with both sympathetic support and procedural fairness for all parties. College of Counselling Convenor Maree Armansin has been pivotal in bringing together our college convenors and our branch leadership group convenors to ensure relationships remain key to PACFA's evolution.

Our new colleges are gaining strength as they develop robust processes to recognise the specialised skills of their members and build supportive peer networks. The College of Supervision (CoS) was established in early 2023 with

Our purpose

Why does PACFA exist?

• PACFA exists to support its members and the community by regulating the training and practice of Psychotherapy, Counselling and Indigenous Healing Practices to the highest standards of safety, quality and professionalism.⁹

Regulating includes certification, registration, accreditation, and complaints management.

Our mission

What does PACFA do for whom?

PACFA regulates and supports the provision of effective high-quality Psychotherapy, Counselling, and Indigenous Healing Practices.

To do this, PACFA:

- registers and certifies suitably qualified and skilled practitioners
- accredits appropriate training courses
- provides resources and a professional network for the development of Psychotherapy, Counselling, and Indigenous Healing Practitioners
- educates and advocates to the public, other professions, and policy makers to ensure the value of Psychotherapy, Counselling and Indigenous Healing Practices is recognised and appreciated.

Our values

How do we behave while we are doing it?

Authenticity

- We act with integrity by being consistent, fair, transparent, and accountable.
- We are trustworthy and professional. We do what we say we will do.
- We are courageous in our willingness to speak our truth.
- We stand for the value and integrity of Psychotherapy, Counselling, and Indigenous Healing Practices.

Compassion

- We approach everyone from a position of kindness and goodwill.
- We celebrate difference and diversity.

Connection

- We seek to connect with curiosity and openness.
- We value the self of the practitioner as the heart of professional practice, and the role of professional supervision in safeguarding our practices and their recipients.

Humility

- We acknowledge our mistakes, embrace our failures, and learn from them.



leadership from Deborah Cameron, and the College of Creative and Experiential Therapies (CCET), established in 2022, continues to grow from strength to strength thanks to the tireless work of inaugural Convenor Carla van Laar. PACFA Colleges provide pathways for PACFA registrants to be verified as accredited specialists within their fields—Psychotherapy, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Practices, Creative and Experiential Therapies, Clinical Supervision, Relationship Counselling. This doesn't just happen, it takes a lot of hard work behind the scenes. I thank my fellow directors and all PACFA volunteers for their passion, commitment and hard work to make these aspirations possible.

I have set all of this out to highlight the ways in which PACFA is a true collective of diverse professional perspectives brought together through transparent, inclusive and democratic governance policies and practices, and supported by independent external voices.

This is what our professions need. In order to demonstrate our value and take our rightful place within the mental health and other landscapes within which counsellors, psychotherapists and Indigenous healing practitioners work we need to be seen to be highly credible, impeccably ethical and of the utmost integrity.

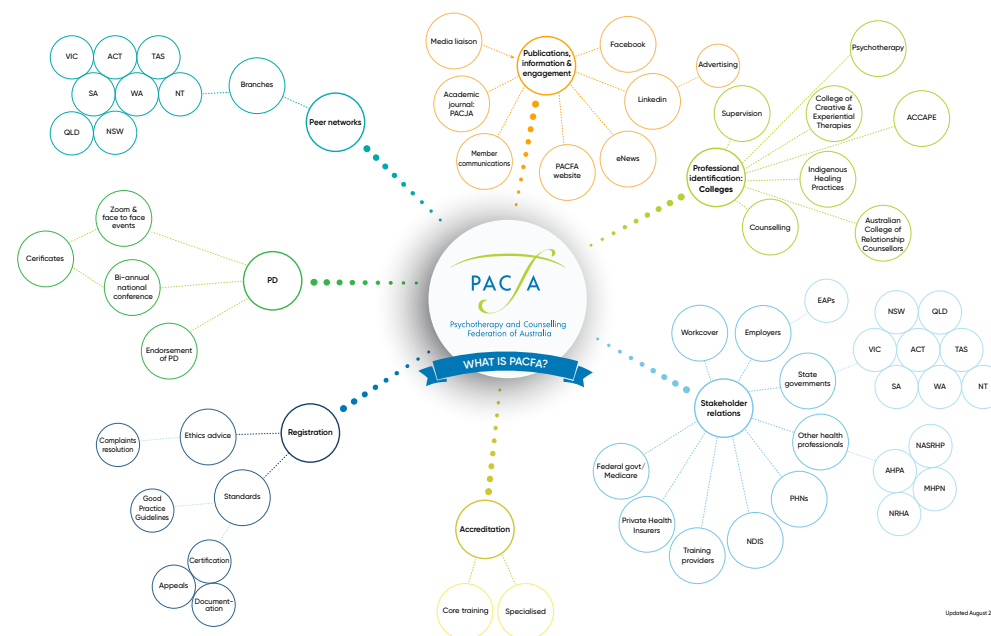
It is on these foundations that our professions will grow and prosper. This can be seen with PACFA's promotion from 'Affiliate' to 'Ordinary' member of [Allied Health Professions Australia](#),

making us the only professional association for counsellors and psychotherapists to have met these standards. We anticipate too that we will soon meet the requirements to become a full member of the [National Alliance of Self-Regulating Health Professions](#). This elevation of credibility for our professions builds the confidence of employers, government, consumers and other industry stakeholders in the safety, integrity and efficacy of PACFA registered counsellors, psychotherapists and Indigenous healing practitioners.

By holding to our high standards we are raising the profile of our members in the areas that matter most—government, employers, and other allied professionals. This is a slow, deliberate and quiet strategy. It is well thought through and deliberately designed. It is designed, not to make a fleeting impression on social media, but to ensure the long-term survival and success of our professions well into the future. Through such well-informed strategic analysis and planning, detailed project management, considered stakeholder engagement and a strong culture of integrity and accountability will we leave a lasting legacy for counsellors, psychotherapists and Indigenous healing practitioners long into the future.



Nigel Polak
President



Board



Nigel Polak
President



Doug Aberle
Vice President



Maree Armansin
College of Counselling Convenor



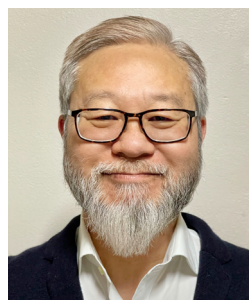
Professor Judy Atkinson
College of Aboriginal
and Torres Strait Islander
Healing Practices Co-Convenor



Ass. Prof. Cathy Bettman
Research Committee Chair



Dr Pamela Brear
Professional Standards
Committee Chair



Francis Kim
Treasurer



Ernst Meyer
College of
Psychotherapy Convenor



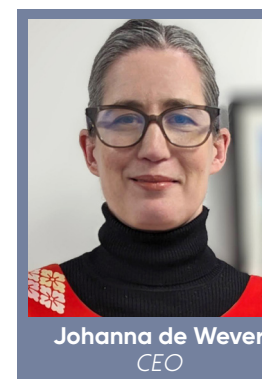
Helen Phelan
Ethics Committee Chair
(from September 2023)



Bianca Stawiarski
College of Aboriginal
and Torres Strait Islander
Healing Practices Co-Convenor



Dr Di Stow
Immediate Past President



Johanna de Wever
CEO



PACFA Governance structure



The 2022–2023 year has been a critical one for PACFA, with the achievement of key strategic and operational milestones.

Most significantly the 2023–2024 Federal Budget included the announcement of a 300k investment by the Australian Government in the development of National Standards for Counsellors and Psychotherapists 'to strengthen these self-regulated professions and improve their utilisation in multidisciplinary teams across a range of settings including health, disability and education'. This commitment was a direct result of recommendations made in the 2021 Select Inquiry into mental health and suicide prevention which PACFA supported at the time, demonstrating how interconnected opportunities for consultation, building on years of organisational advocacy, can eventually result in the opportunity for reform.

Of course the outcomes of this project, and most importantly the standards themselves, are not yet known. However, the commitment of funding to this sector, and the invitation to PACFA to advise on the process, is promising. The timeline provided indicates broader consultation will occur in mid 2024 with publication and Ministerial endorsement expected in 2025, and implementation potentially beyond this.

This gives us a timeline for the continuous improvement of our registration and membership services

to meet community and sector expectations. In 2022, we refined our online membership services, increasing our efficiency and improving our responsiveness. We have undertaken a significant review of our accreditation function, and are investing in our relationships with training providers, Member Associations, employers, lived experience organisations, allied health professions and peak bodies.

Our investment in the *Psychotherapy and Counselling Journal of Australia* (PACJA) has provided opportunities for the publication of important articles, with more to come as we discuss the future of counselling and psychotherapy and its challenges. These provide a framework for the conversations we need to have as we refine our Scope of Practice, develop competencies and support the varied professional identities of PACFA members.

In 2023, research published in PACJA reported that registered counsellors were ineligible for 27% of advertised 'counsellor' jobs. This ongoing trend of employers prioritising AHPRA registration requires a strong counter-balance. From July, PACFA was the first counselling registration organisation to require a Criminal History and Working with Children Check (if

relevant). The article by Registered Clinical Counsellor (RCC) Nathan Beel also found that in addition to these checks, most employers required tertiary qualifications, and that PACFA registration was the most frequently cited, all indicating we are on the right path.

Whilst we appreciate the goodwill with which our members have accepted these requirements, I cannot go on without acknowledging the remarkable work done by staff behind the scenes to ensure this happens as smoothly as possible. PACFA's membership team of four in particular work tirelessly to manage the day-to-day work of nearly 8000 membership records whilst simultaneously answering more than 15,000 telephone calls and 25,000 emails, and embracing plans for improving services for members for our consistently growing membership.

Operationally, PACFA is a lean operation with just 12 staff, most working flexibly from home and the Creative Cubes co-working space and others working from Canberra, Queensland and New South Wales. This year has seen a significant increase in activity alongside changes in how our business is managed with design, IT, finance and HR outsourced in order to prioritise member-facing services such as college and committee support. I know you will all join with me when I thank them for



their energy and engagement as they travel with us on this journey.

Finally, I would like to thank the Board for their dedication during this time of change. Being a PACFA Board Director is a significant volunteer commitment, with regular meetings, constant emails, and frequent calls. Thankfully it is also an expression of passionate commitment to an important therapeutic vocation. Without their leadership and generosity the work described above would not be possible.

Johanna de Wever
CEO

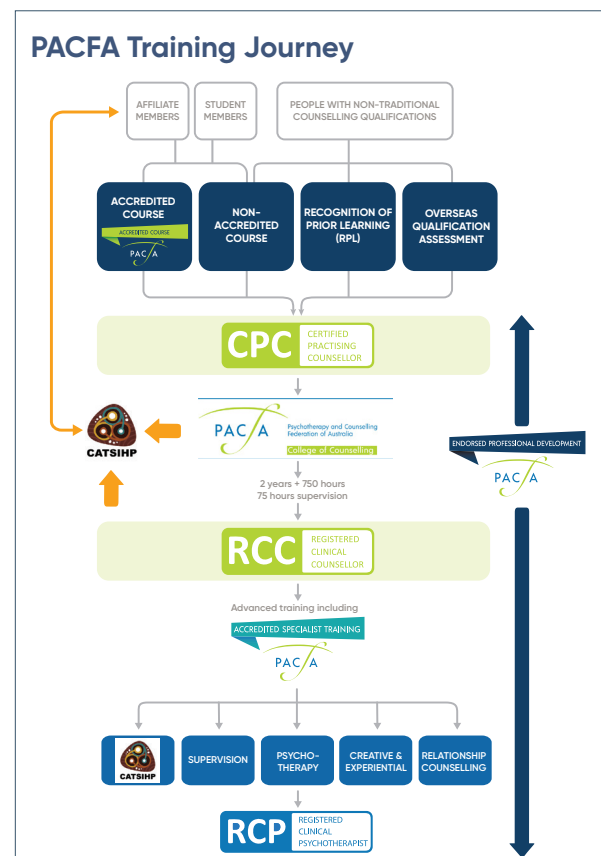
Key activities 2022–23

- ✓ **PACFA successfully advocated to the Federal Government** to invest in a project in the 2023–24 Budget for the establishment of *National Standards for Counselling and Psychotherapy* to strengthen the profession and increase utilisation in multidisciplinary teams across a range of settings including health, disability, and education. The project will be overseen by the Department of Health and Aged Care to ensure that it is sector-wide and meets government workforce development priorities.
- ✓ **Upgraded our membership of Allied Health Professionals Australia** from Affiliate to Ordinary, being the only mental health counselling organisation to meet these standards. Also joined National Alliance of Self Regulating Health Professions (NASRHP) as a Qualifying Member (January 2023) and National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA) (May 2023) to raise the profile of members and the profession.
- ✓ MOUs were signed with the Christian Counsellors Association of Australia & Australian Hypnotherapy Association to **support greater engagement with other membership organisations** across the sector and streamline cross-organisational activity.
- ✓ The **PACJA website** was launched on Scholastica academic journal platform to improve readability and accessibility driving an increase in readers (5.2k per month) and submissions.
- ✓ The Professional Standards Committee published **nine foundational Registration Standards** to provide rigorous guidance regarding registration and membership processes including: Proof of Identity, Criminal History, Professional Indemnity Insurance, Client Contact, Clinical Supervision, CPD and Ethical Practice and Professional Conduct, plus associated policies.
- ✓ In September 2022 PACFA held our first innovative festival of ideas discussing **Safety in Diversity** with **270 attendees participating**.
- ✓ **Participated in advocacy, policy development and consultations** with Mental Health Australia, AHPA, NASRHP and NRHA on issues ranging from self-regulation, scope of practice, workforce, digital health, and GST exclusion to rural mental health.
- ✓ PACFA continued to enhance member services with a more accessible Jobs Board and Rooms for Rent service, an integrated CPD and enewsletter, and more web content to **support registration and membership**.
- ✓ Increased communication tools including **redesigned enews, visualisation of training and mind maps** to engage members and increase understanding of PACFA's complex role and responsibilities.



Membership

- ✓ In 2022–23 PACFA welcomed **2053** new members including **768** Registrants, bringing membership to nearly **7500** as of 30 July 2023
- ✓ Our registration application process was reduced from **8 to 6 weeks**, and our upgrade assessment process from **6 to 4 weeks**.
- ✓ **Implemented requirements** for Criminal History and Working with Children Checks to ensure we meet employer and community expectations.
- ✓ **Improved online processes** for insurance and introduced online services for Criminal History Check, Leave of Absence, Reactivation and Upgrade applications.
- ✓ More than **1400** members were registered for **Private Health Insurance rebates** across **13** insurers (Medibank, ahm, Bupa, St Luke's Health, Police Health, GMHBA, Westfund, Emergency Services Health, Phoenix Health and CUA Health).
- ✓ **Three new Private Health Insurers** (Teachers Union Health, AIA Health, HCF Insurance) welcomed PACFA Registrants.
- ✓ Promoted our **discounted New Graduate registration** (**25%** off standard registration) resulting in **410** new graduates registering.
- ✓ Reviewed our **Recognition of Prior Learning** criteria and process.
- ✓ In 2022–2023 PACFA registrants were **recognised for rebates by worker compensation services** Worksafe (Victoria) and RTWSA (SA) joining Workcover Queensland and SIRA (NSW).



Colleges & Practice

- ✓ Welcomed the new **College of Supervision** and transitioned **Accredited Supervisors** to the college.
- ✓ Published two new **Good Practice Guidelines** in response to member interest: *Maintaining client records* and *Writing session notes*.
- ✓ **Surveyed memberships** of Colleges of Counselling, Supervision, and Psychotherapy to inform service development and gather valuable feedback.
- ✓ Introduced a **free Community CPD policy** for volunteers giving 10 free hours of Community CPD to all Leadership Group and Committee members.
- ✓ **Revised our Professional Conduct Procedures** as part of the continuous improvement of ethics service.
- ✓ Updated PACFA's website with information about **103 volunteers** to recognise their valuable contribution and ensure transparency for members.
- ✓ **Provided advice on ethical practice** to 218 members and addressed 32 ethical concerns.



College of Counselling



CATSIHP



Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia

College of Creative and Experiential Therapies



Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia

College of Psychotherapy



Australian College of Relationship Counsellors



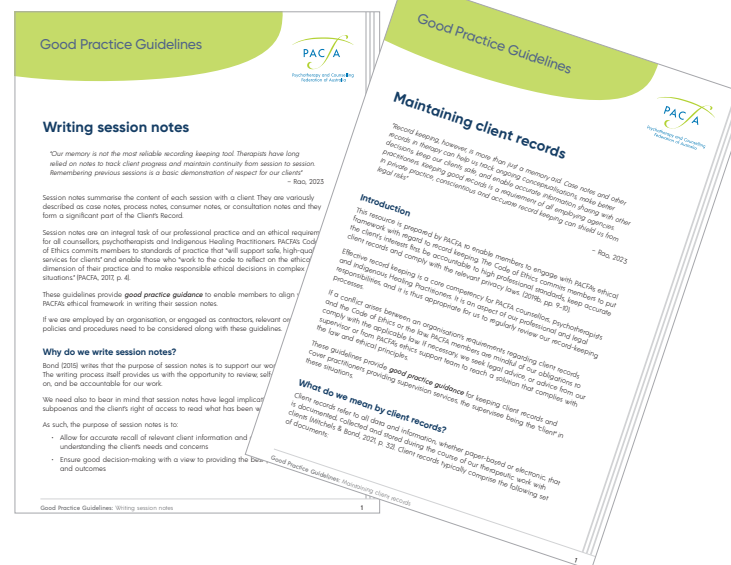
Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia

College of Supervision



Accreditation

- ✓ Created a **Head of Education position** to ensure PACFA's accreditation function supports continuous improvement.
- ✓ Launched **new CPD Endorsement guidelines** with stringent requirements.
- ✓ Endorsed a total of **68 external CPD courses** from 30 different providers, including issuing 6 licence agreements.
- ✓ Supported volunteers to hold **63 CPD events and 12 short courses**.
- ✓ **Registered 3751 people** at PACFA Community CPD events.
- ✓ Enabled **2723 free downloads** of PACFA Community CPD webinars.
- ✓ Undertaking a review our **Specialist Training Accreditation** framework.
- ✓ Undertaken a full review of **Course Accreditation** process.
- ✓ Supported **33 accredited programs** across 21 providers.
- ✓ Assessed **5 new programs** for core accreditation.
- ✓ **Worked with a team of 12 Assessors** including 6 EPAC members.
- ✓ Documented a plan for achieving **full membership of NASRHP** in 2024–25.



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Key membership data for 2022–2023 (as of 30 June 2023)

Categories of membership	
Registered Clinical Counsellors	2150
Certified Practising Counsellors	2207
Affiliate members	109
Academic members	10
Non-practising members	100
Student members	2799
Total registrants	4357

Branches	
ACT Branch Members	156
NSW Branch Members	2811
NT Branch Members	37
Overseas members	135
Queensland branch members	1135
South Australian branch members	513
Tasmanian branch members	121
Victorian branch members	1801
Western Australian branch members	666
Grand total of members	7375

College membership	
College of Counselling	4930
College of Psychotherapy	199
Australian College of Relationship Counsellors	266
College of Counselling and Psychotherapy Educators	305
College of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Practices	123
College of Supervision	371

* College of Creative and Experiential Therapies has not yet formally opened for membership

Member Association members	
Australian Association of Buddhist Counsellors and Psychotherapists	15
Australian Transactional Analysis Association	8
Association of Soul Centred Psychotherapists	16
Association of Transpersonal and Experiential Psychotherapist	21
Australian and Aotearoa New Zealand Psychodrama Association	7
Australian Radix Body Centered Psychotherapy Association	4
Christian Counsellors Association of Australia	270

Total Members: **7375**

Total Registrants: **4357**

2053 new members joined in 2022–2023



Treasurer's report 2022–23

Audited financial statements

PACFA's financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2023 were prepared by independent auditors, Saward Dawson Chartered Accountants. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Australian Accounting Standards, the Associations Incorporation Act 1991 (ACT), and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012. Thank you to Saward Dawson and to PACFA's Finance Manager, Belinda Gomez, for successful completion of the audit.

Income and expenditure analysis

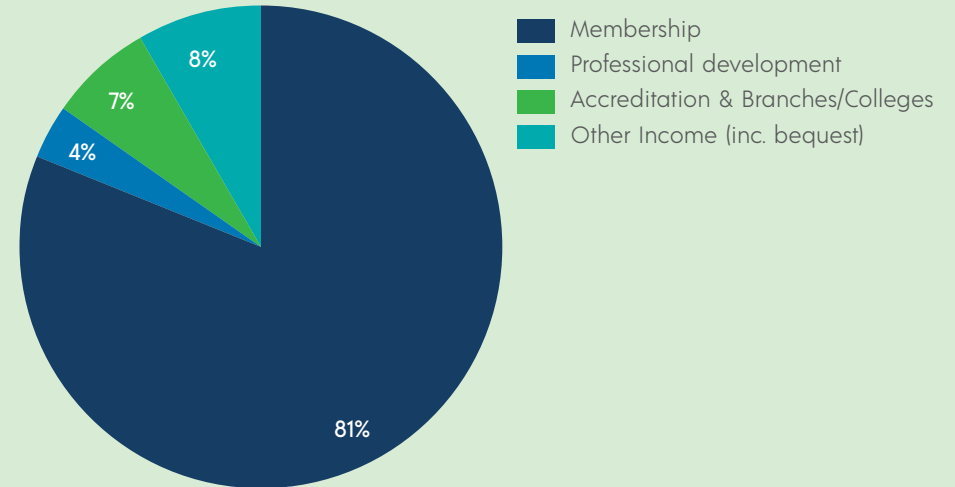
The growth in revenue in 2022–23 was principally from membership growth and increased professional development events delivered by PACFA and the Branches and Colleges.

We were fortunate that the interest rates on term deposits rose during the year, which brought additional income to the organisation.

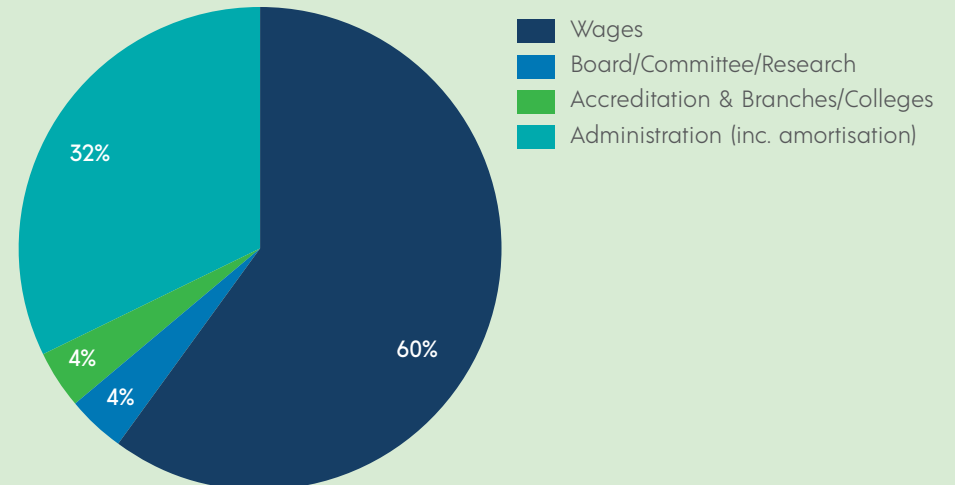
The largest expenditure item has been staffing as PACFA has invested in building a strong team to deliver the best outcomes for the members and to respond to the current recruitment market. In December 2022 we moved to a comfortable and more centralised workplace in Carlton where we share office space with varied businesses and organisations and spend less time doing housekeeping duties.

At our mid-year Budget review it was agreed to invest in operations, and a deficit budget was predicted. The Board is in full support of utilising PACFA's reserves in coming years to ensure a strong future for the organisation.

Income 2022–23



Expenses 2022–23



Balance sheet

PACFA has undertaken an investment strategy to enable growth in member systems and services, resulting in a deficit of \$126,817 in 2022/23. This has coincided with increased wages due to market pressures post-Covid. Given ongoing growth, this expenditure is expected to return ongoing benefits to PACFA in coming years. A reserve of \$20,676 remains for ongoing costs related to the office relocation.

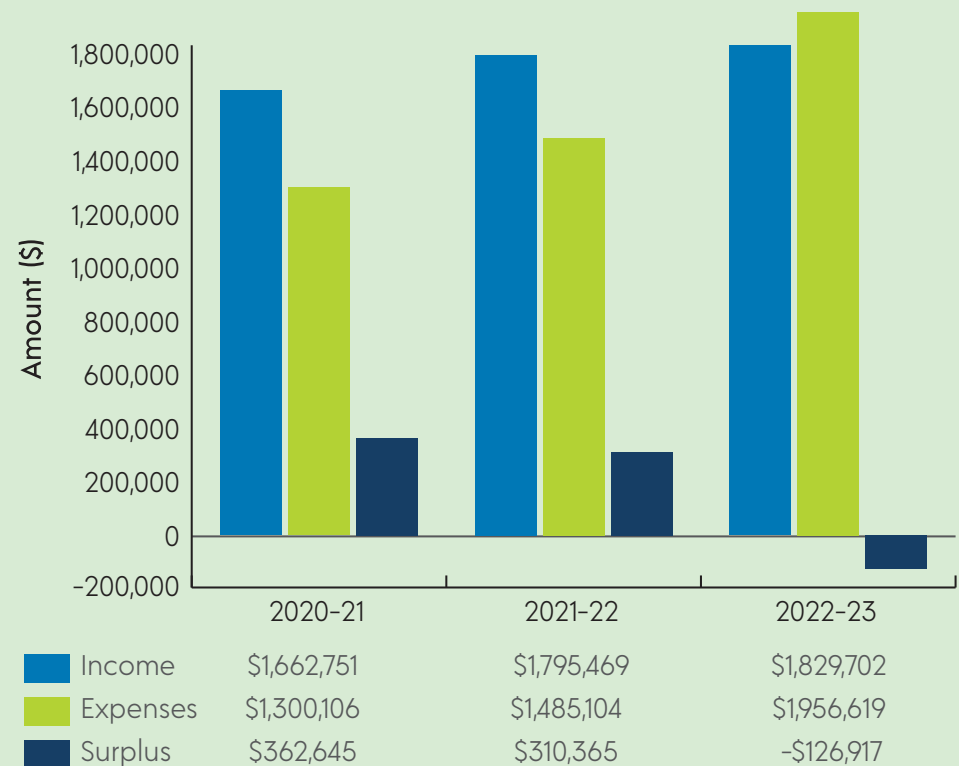
The Board has invested some of the reserves in the 2022/23 financial year to pursue our mission and priority agenda.

As a result, this year's net assets, after meeting all liabilities, decreased from \$1,235,086 in 2021-22 to \$1,108,169.

The small reduction in reserves this year is because of the significant investment to ensure the delivery of a high standard of service to all our members in the future. Our reserves represent a strong balance sheet position for a non-profit organisation the size of PACFA.

Going forward, the Board aims to fund growth of services for members and invest in additional staffing and expertise to meet member and sector expectations. This will mean that reserves will stabilise over the next 5-year period as gains are reinvested.

Income and expenses with previous years' figures



Francis Kim
PACFA Treasurer

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