



PSYCHOTHERAPY WORKING PARTY



Dear psychotherapy colleagues,

As Chair of PACFA's Psychotherapy Working Party with the mission "to consider the future of psychotherapy as a profession in Australia with a focus on psychotherapy training", I first of all want to note that it is an honour to be working with a group of colleagues that recognise the significance of our task and are passionate about the future of Psychotherapy in Australia.

The PACFA Board is supporting the important work of the Working Party by allocating budget for the group to hold face to face meetings. The Board also requested me to provide regular updates to members to keep you informed of the work of the Working Party. This is the first update and I look forward to updating members on a regular basis.



Subject matter experts: Alison Strasser and Christina Nielsen

The Working Party is made up of representatives of PACFA as well as "subject matter experts" who are psychotherapists from diverse backgrounds. The Terms of Reference for the Working Party and biographies for the subject-matter experts are available at the [PACFA website](#).

At our first meeting in August last year, it became evident that we, as a group, need to take a 'big picture' perspective on how psychotherapy and the various training programs arose historically, and to understand the current landscape. This will help us identify standards for psychotherapy that are appropriate and best practice for our stakeholders including PACFA members, training providers, clients and Government. Our next meeting was a face to face meeting on 22 September, at which we began exploring the 'big picture'.

To further our understanding of the Australian psychotherapy landscape, we agreed that it was important to be inclusive and to consult within our own community. A consultation process is being planned and any feedback from the consultation will help us emerge with a more informed proposal around the requirements for psychotherapy training. Additionally, we will continue to consider how PACFA can support the continuation of psychotherapy as a distinct profession not only within PACFA but also within Australia, in particular by supporting training providers to offer appropriate training pathways for psychotherapists.

At the start of our second face to face meeting on Saturday 19 January, we realised that the concept of 'future' and 'psychotherapy' had two intersecting objectives. Firstly, we have our current members, some of whom would like to be acknowledged and recognised as psychotherapists and secondly, it's important to look forward for those beginning their journey as psychotherapists, to clarify what training requirements will be appropriate and the various options to achieve them.

Much of the morning was spent debating what is involved in the formation of a psychotherapist and there was a moment of relief when we realised that those present at the meeting had reached a general consensus. It seems obvious but put simply, all psychotherapy trainings have three intersecting components: theory and learning, personal work and supervised practice.



PACFA representatives: Denis O'Hara and Maria Brett



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Having reached this consensus, we agreed that there were a multitude of differing perceptions around the composition of these three components, depending on your theoretical orientation, personal experiences and so on. To gather more details, we would like to consult with PACFA's current member pool and discover more about people's original training and the various pathways taken subsequently to develop their capacity as psychotherapists. By saying this, we want to recognise both the traditional one-stop psychotherapy training as well as the divergent

pathways people may have found themselves taking to progress their development as a psychotherapist.

Secondly, it is beneficial to our PACFA community to understand the spectrum of existing psychotherapy training programs and what they comprise. With the assistance of staff in the PACFA Office, who drafted a 'map' of current training programs, we're getting a greater understanding of the variety training programs being offered in Australia. We've been aware of those that are accredited either by TEQSA, ASQA and/or PACFA but there are numerous other trainings on offer. Our intention is to contact and consult as many of these programs as possible.

On a last note, I believe it's all too easy to imitate what other countries have done and it's not that we can't learn from others but we can also be brave and step out on our own and to believe that what we have is uniquely Australian.

Dr Alison Strasser
Chair, Psychotherapy Working Party



Subject matter experts: Valerie Redman, Kate Briggs and Tara Green

Psychotherapy Working Party

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The PACFA Board has established a Working Party to consider the future of psychotherapy as a profession in Australia with a focus on psychotherapy training. A key aim is to reduce any adverse impacts on psychotherapy training from the introduction of the PACFA Training Standards 2018.

The Working Party will undertake a range of activities in relation to competencies and standards for psychotherapy training and supporting the retention of existing psychotherapy training programs and the development of new training pathways for psychotherapy.

The Working Party's considerations will be informed by recognition of a psychotherapist formational process that requires a distinct training approach.

It is intended that the Working Party's activities will support the advancement of psychotherapy as a distinct profession within PACFA and in Australia more broadly.

Download the full [Terms of Reference](#)