



Psychotherapy & Counselling  
Federation of Australia

# The Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA)

## Follow-up Submission to the Australian Senate Community Affairs Committee Inquiry into Mental Health Services in Australia

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**Director of Research** Margot Schofield, BA, Grad Dip Sc, MClinPsych, PhD, MAPS,  
Professor of Counselling and Psychotherapy, La Trobe University

## **Overview of Higher Education Training Programs in Counselling and Psychotherapy**

PACFA made a submission to the Senate inquiry in September 2007 and provided further evidence at the Public Hearing in Melbourne in April 2008. Part of this evidence related to the negative impact of the changes to mental health policy on recruitment into counselling and psychotherapy training courses, and on referrals to non-psychologist counsellors and psychotherapists. Particular policy elements which have impacted on the counselling and psychotherapy profession and training bodies are the Medicare Rebates to Psychologists but not counsellors and psychotherapists, and the increased funding for places in psychology training programs.

The point was made at the Public Hearing that there are a large number of university-based counselling and psychotherapy courses as well as a large number of accredited higher education courses in the private sector which are likely to be affected by discrimination against counsellors and psychotherapists in these initiatives. The panel raised the issue of uncertainty about training standards for counsellors and psychotherapists as a barrier to recognition. It was pointed out in our evidence that there are a large number of postgraduate courses in Australian universities that have been well regarded by past employers of counsellors, but that the Medicare rebates make it more viable for the private sector and non-government organisation to employ psychologists who can bring in government rebates for their services

At the Public Hearing, the Chair of the panel asked for further information about university and higher education courses, especially university based courses. We have therefore attached an updated list of all known University based courses and all government accredited graduate and post-graduate courses offered in the area of counselling and psychotherapy.

**Our research shows that 25 of Australia's Universities offer mainly postgraduate and some graduate courses in counselling and psychotherapy.**

**There are also 24 government accredited private Training Providers offering graduate and postgraduate level courses in counselling and psychotherapy.**

This indicates a very large training sector and a large number of postgraduate trained professional counsellors and psychotherapists coming onto the employment market and having to compete at a great disadvantage with Medicare rebatable psychological services. This is an important negative impact of the changing government mental health policy and constitutes a form of discrimination against one health discipline area.

We request that in the Inquiry into Mental Health Services in Australia address this inequity in its recommendations.