



An Association of Gestalt Practitioners

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Best Practice self-regulation of psychotherapy and counselling report.

Thank you for opportunity to comment on this reports findings and recommendations. I am responding on behalf of 400 members, of varying membership level, of Gestalt Australia and New Zealand (GANZ), a professional association for Gestalt Psychotherapy.

I would first like to acknowledge the assistance of DHS in supporting the study which has provided a comprehensive and thoughtful analysis.

GANZ agrees that the climate for statutory regulation is not conducive at present, however reaffirms the desire for that as an eventual outcome, as has been the direction in some overseas countries with rigorous policies.

In the interim, and following the publication of the report, PACFA and ACA have moved to a position of agreement in terms of establishing a single credentialing system. This position has the absolute support of GANZ, in demonstrating responsible creation of a self regulatory system that includes the setting of training standards, membership criteria, governance and ethical practice standards and complaints processes, and ongoing professional development requirements.

The single credentialing system also begins to address the issue of mental health competency recognition, where we have several concerns that we encourage various government stakeholders to consider:

1. The Senate inquiry demonstrated unequivocally that the services of appropriately qualified counsellors and psychotherapists was valued by consumers – undeniably the key stakeholders in this aspect of health care, and whose voice must be considered.

2. The mental health competencies that exist are framed from a public health system perspective, rather than a private practitioner perspective, yet many of our members are denied access to jobs in the public health system due to the statutory profession qualifications requirements. Nevertheless, our Clinical Members deal adequately with clients who have been or could be assigned a DSM category. Our members are trained in responsible referral and in involvement in case management processes.
3. The distinction between mental illness and mental health disorders is not clear in Department of Health and Aging communications. Depression and anxiety for example are very common presentations in our members clients, as are eating disorders, PTSD, and various Personality Disorders. I include this detail to assure that many of our members are capable of providing a service based on sound theoretical and practice knowledge across a broad literature base. Our members include people who are already qualified in the statutory professions, and value the additional benefits of the gestalt approach.
4. We would support some clarification and broadening of the definition of 'evidence base'.

In summary, GANZ is committed to providing quality health care to a range of clients who experience distress, and supports the development of a government recognised regulated profession that protects the public from inappropriate practitioners.

Alan Meara



President GANZ