



Australian Hypnotherapists' Association

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Service and Workforce Planning Branch
Department of Human Services
GPO Box 4057
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Submission by email to: practitioner.regulation@dhs.vic.gov.au

Subject: Regulatory Models for Psychotherapy and Counselling

The Australian Hypnotherapists' Association would like to thank the Victorian Government, the Department of Human Services for the opportunity to contribute to this submission.

Considerations –

It is noted that the Department's intention is that its report and submissions be referred to the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council for consideration by the Practitioner Regulation Subcommittee of the Health Workforce Principal Committee. And that the Practitioner Regulation Subcommittee will review the report in the context of the Council of Australian Governments ('COAG') agreements of July 2006, April 2006 and March 2008 concerning registration of unregistered health professions within a national registration scheme.

It is further noted, that the recently signed Intergovernmental Agreement of 26 March 2008, commits the states, territories and the Commonwealth to the national registration scheme. It states that following the registered professions, priority will be given to partially regulated occupations (to be assessed for inclusion in the scheme), followed by unregulated health occupations. COAG agreed the scheme would be operational by 1 July 2010.

The Statutory Regulatory Model -

A Statutory Regulatory Model puts into place those things that a Government department deems as a best practice model that endeavours to ensure the public consumers safety and through overseeing that a practitioner under this regulation meets those standards that have been put into place. The practitioner needs to show that they have met this criteria to meet ongoing re-accreditation.

How does this compare to a Self-Regulatory Model?

A Self-Regulatory Model puts into place those things that its democratically elected Board (in consultation with its peers and members) deems as a best practice model that endeavours to ensure the public consumers safety and through overseeing that a practitioner under this self-regulation meets those standards that have been put into place. The practitioner needs to show that they have met this criteria to meet ongoing re-accreditation.

What are the current main differences between Statutory and Self-Regulatory Models?

The Statutory Regulatory Model ensures uniform standards. A regulatory system of levels of required training, code of conduct, insurance and complaints procedures covering all practitioners, whilst -

The Self-Regulatory Model relies on individual systems of levels of required training, code of conduct, insurance and complaints procedure requirements for membership and re-accreditation as set by its own governing association.

(With the exception of NSW that now requires unregistered practitioners in that State to practice under the Public Health (General) Amendment Regulation 2008, under the Public Health Act 1991, legislation brought in on the 1st August 2008.)

Specific Considerations -

Psychotherapy and Counselling (And hypnotherapy which is included in this model) has many different forms of training and different theoretical modalities specific to the fundamental way a practitioner works. And although this can and is being continually improved across all areas, the current self-regulation model shows that it can and does have a framework of self regulation that produces excellent outcomes in terms of consumer safety.

Submission –

The Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA) report documents the considerable research and widespread consultation processes that informed the report. The report relates to information up to the 2003-2005 period from which most data and consultation was collated. Over the past 2 years both Government policy and the profession have both moved on considerably.

As has been pointed out, both PACFA and the Australian Counselling Association (ACA) have been working to develop a single Australian Counselling and Psychotherapy Register that would be an inclusive national listing of credentialed counsellors and psychotherapists who accept the standards, codes of conduct and ethics, insurance and continuing education requirements of recognised clinical and professional member associations. To this end, these organisations are working closely together with a Working Party represented by members of both PACFA and ACA, that will develop the structure that this should take.

At present we already have self-regulation for Psychotherapy and Counselling across Australia through professional organizations. Practitioners practicing under these professional organizations are already practicing under guidelines that have shown they are responsible to the public and willing to be accountable to validate their practice. Further validation of accountability will be established through the formation of a National Register of Psychotherapists and Counsellors. Intended publication and advertising of such a register will make the public aware of where to find a trained practitioner.

In NSW, the Government has introduced a Code of Conduct, a regulatory system which supports Government Monitored Self-Regulation rather than Statutory Regulation. This is also being considered in other States of Australia. We would urge other States for such an inclusion to keep the public safe from bogus and unethical practitioners.

We believe that a Government Monitored Self Regulation model is adequate to protect the public and is both achievable and appropriate. We would be pleased to receive support from the Council of Australian Governments ('COAG') to guide the profession to this end.

Yours sincerely,



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National President - AHA