

SUBMISSION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE AUSTRALIAN PSYCHOANALYTICAL SOCIETY ON BEST PRACTICE SELF-REGULATION OF PSYCHOTHERAPY AND COUNSELLING

The Australian Psychoanalytical Society which was established in 1973 is a component Society of the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA), which currently has more than 10,000 members in 34 countries. The IPA sets and monitors standards of training, professional practice and ethics; the Australian Society is the only body in Australia authorized by the IPA to educate, train and qualify psychoanalysts. Our main activities include the training of psychoanalysts and educating the community about psychoanalysis through public lectures, seminars and Conferences.

The Society has currently 76 members and 20 candidates. Psychoanalysts come from a variety of professional backgrounds, mainly from psychiatry, psychology and social work. Psychoanalysts work both in the public and private health sectors. Our members have different areas of interest: some specialize in early interventions with mothers and infants, in treatment of children/adolescents and their families, and of couples, and in helping people who suffer from depression, trauma and borderline personality disorder and other serious emotional disturbances

The Australian Society has worked since 1997 with The Standing Conference of Educators and Trainers in Counseling and Psychotherapy and is one of the founding members of PACFA, having worked closely with it and contributed to its development. The Australian Society as early as 1995/96 initiated a series of meeting with the representatives of the main psychodynamic psychotherapy training organizations operating in this country with the aim of co-ordinating training and ethical standards in view of future self-regulation of the profession. .

The APAS would like to underline its ongoing interest in the matter of regulation of the profession, in training, in maintaining professional standards and in the protection of the public from malpractice: maintaining standards of competence and ethical behaviour is essential for a profession which deals with mental health and with emotional disturbances. The core principles of best practice we endeavour to work toward include a rigorous training programme and clear and transparent ethical standards.

Training standards: Our training is at a post-graduate level (minimum 4 years).

Maintenance of professional standards: These are maintained by a programme of continuous professional development lasting one's professional life. This involves supervision/discussion of one's clinical work, peer review and constant updating on clinical and ethical matters and on overseas developments. The emphasis is on group work, avoiding the clinician working in isolation, away from confrontation with his/her peers.

On the matter of regulation of the profession, our concerns are the following;

1. At the moment there is no protection of the title of psychotherapist nor statutory registration of the profession of psychotherapy: at the moment anyone can call themselves a psychotherapist. This means that the public has no protection from untrained or poorly trained practitioners and from practitioners who work in isolation, not part of a professional organization. We are supporting the proposed National Register of Counselors and Psychotherapists as it would offer a listing of credentialed psychotherapists and counselors. If widely advertised with an effective public education program, it would enable the public to identify and access properly trained and qualified health professionals.
2. Of particular concern to our organization is that fact that deregulated psychiatrists, psychologists or psychotherapists who are expelled from their organizations for malpractice can continue to practice. There is no legislation at the moment to protect the public. This

exposes people who may be unaware of the past record of their practitioner and who may continue to be at risk of the malpractice being repeated again at their expense.

3. Our organization is in favor of a long term strategy for the statutory regulation of the profession and the protection of the public. We support the development of a best practice model of self regulation as presented by the National Register for Psychotherapists and Counseling as a transitional step in the direction of a statutory registration system , which ultimately would be the most effective protection for the public. We also support the recognition and inclusion of psychotherapists as members of the allied health profession.

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