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Mr Dan Harvey
Senior Policy Advisor
Service and Workforce Planning Branch
Department of Human Services
GPO Box 4057
MELBOURNE VIC 3001
email: practitioner.regulation@dhs.vic.gov.au

Dear Mr Harvey,

Submission concerning the report on best practice self-regulation of psychotherapy and counselling in Australia.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our response to the above mentioned report.

Who are we?

Rehabilitation Counsellors are university trained professional counsellors who facilitate the personal, social and economic independence of individuals with disabilities or social disadvantage. Rehabilitation Counsellors provide counselling; evaluation of social, medical, vocational, and psychiatric information; and deliver job placement and job development services, as well as being involved in research and advocacy.

The Australian Society of Rehabilitation Counsellors (ASORC) is the peak professional body representing Rehabilitation Counsellors throughout Australia since 1976. The Society is active in establishing and assessing qualifications and experience requirements for entry to the profession, accrediting university programs in Rehabilitation Counselling nationally, providing professional development and supervision to members, maintaining the highest level of professional standards through a rigorous Code of Ethics, and ensuring that members possess an extensive set of professional Core Competency practitioner skills.

Response to the Report

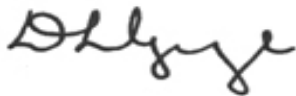
ASORC welcomes the COAG decision to implement a national registration scheme for unregulated health professions, including the counselling professions. We believe that the registration of counsellors will greatly assist in ensuring that those involved in the practice of counselling and psychotherapy are appropriately academically trained, possess the professional skills to provide effective and safe services, are accountable, and operate within an ethical framework. These are all absolutely essential if the government and public are to have confidence in the counselling and psychotherapy professions.

ASORC agrees that self regulation of counsellors and psychotherapists by the profession is an effective method of ensuring that appropriate standards are implemented and maintained.

Of the two models of self regulation outlined in the report, ASORC supports the implementation of Model One. This model builds on the current work of PACFA. ASORC holds the view that as PACFA was formed to perform a regulatory role as an 'association of associations', and has a ten year history of building a substantial base of affiliated associations from across the counselling and psychotherapy spectrum, it is well placed to provide regulatory services. This model would ensure that member associations are required to meet minimum standards, thus providing confidence that individual counsellors possess a minimum level of education, practitioner competencies and ethical behaviours expected by the wider Australian community.

ASORC would not be in favour of a model whereby individual counsellors are required to register with a regulatory body regardless of their membership with a professional association. Although counsellors and psychotherapists share a number of core competencies there are a range of different specialist fields. For example, Rehabilitation Counsellors may specialise in vocational rehabilitation, which includes skills such as vocational counselling, adjustment to disability counselling, and vocational assessment and testing. These skills are unlikely to be the focus of a psychotherapist specialising in, say, childhood behavioural disorders. Thus ASORC believes that individual professional associations are vital in maintaining the competencies and skills in the various areas of counselling and psychotherapy. Any model that requires counsellors and psychotherapists, regardless of their background or area of professional practice, to individually register would present problems in ensuring that specialist competency and ethical standards are maintained.

ASORC welcomes any further opportunities to contribute to further discussions in regard to the self-regulation of the counselling and psychotherapy professions in Australia.



David George FASRC
Member – ASORC National Executive

On behalf of the Australian Society of Rehabilitation Counsellors