

Counselling in Australia

The counselling industry in Australia is unregulated. To protect the counselling profession and establish standards, several counselling bodies have been established, each with its own concerns and membership criteria. These include setting standards for training and qualifications, and lobbying the government for recognition and regulation. Three main ones are ACA, AIPC and PACFA.

Australian Counselling Association (ACA)

The **ACA** is recognised as the peak counselling body in Australia. It is the largest single registration body with over 3,000 members. See: <http://www.theaca.net.au>

There are several levels of membership, reflecting qualifications and experience. A prime aim is to set standards for the counselling profession. There are strict criteria for membership, including a minimum number of hours per year of counselling supervision and professional development.

To fulfil the criteria, the qualifications of the supervisor and the nature of the professional development have to be approved by the ACA. The aims and objectives of the ACA can be seen in full at: <http://www.theaca.net.au/about.php?about=aims-and-objectives>

The ACA's code of ethics covers topics such as the standards and scope of counsellor practice, the relationship between counsellor and client, counsellor responsibility, safety, conflict resolution, contracts, legal issues and more. The code can be seen in full at:

<https://www.theaca.net.au/documents/ACA%20Code%20of%20Ethics%20and%20Practice%20Ver%2013.pdf>

The Australian Institute of Professional Counsellors (AIPC)

Some counsellors undertake their training at a university. Others complete their training through a recognised counsellor training body, such as the **AIPC**. The AIPC claims to be 'the largest, longest established, and most trusted counselling education specialist in the country.'

In addition to a Diploma of Professional Counselling, AIPC offers Advanced Majors in areas of specialisation, such as Abuse Counselling or Relationship Counselling. See: <http://www.aipc.net.au>

The AIPC's training programme is comprehensive, covering counselling skills, several major therapies and much more. It is recognised nationally, including by the ACA. So once qualified through AIPC, counsellors are eligible to join the ACA.

Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA)

PACFA is an Australia wide umbrella group, comprising 27 member associations, which have been approved as meeting certain ethical and training standards. See: <http://www.pacfa.org.au>

For member associations, see: <http://www.pacfa.org.au/member-associations/pacfa-members/>

PACFA claims to be a 'national peak body for counsellors and psychotherapists in Australia.' PACFA has a set of ethical standards and a register of approved qualified practitioners.

PACFA's mission is to 'represent the counselling profession to communities and government, and to develop the evidence-base relating to the art and practice of counselling and psychotherapy'.

PACFA's values include diversity, integrity, honesty and respect. See:

<http://www.pacfa.org.au/about/mission-values/>

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