

PACFA UPDATE

The Inaugural Meeting of the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA) took place as planned in Melbourne on November 29th last year—so, an ‘association of professional associations’, PACFA, now exists!

Some thirty five organisations were represented by delegates and affirmed their intention to join PACFA, whilst representatives of professional associations for social workers, psychologists and psychiatrists were also present, as observers. In total, some 95 people attended. Those present represented a wide variety of traditions within the profession: counselling and psychotherapy associations from around the country, and specialist organisations in areas such as gestalt therapy, pastoral counselling, psychodynamic psychotherapy, psychoanalysis, transpersonal therapy and bodywork therapy. Family therapy was well represented, both through several family therapy associations indicating their intention of becoming member organisations of PACFA, and through those family therapists who had been involved in the Standing Conference of Educators and Trainers in Counselling and Psychotherapy that undertook the preparatory work for PACFA.

The format for the day divided into two parts. The morning was spent giving delegates and observers an opportunity to ask questions or make observations about the proposal for PACFA and the draft constitution. Then, in the afternoon, things became more formal with the adoption of the constitution, the election of office holders and committee members, and the formation of sub-committees to tackle various tasks. Whilst there were, inevitably and appropriately, questions and concerns expressed about some aspects of the proposal for PACFA, the overwhelming mood as the day progressed was one of optimism and enthusiasm.

The next six months, leading up to the public launch of PACFA and the first annual meeting of the PACFA Council in July 1999, will see a great deal of behind-the-scenes work to consolidate the structure and operation of the new organisation. An audit will be conducted of organisations joining PACFA to ascertain that their aims and objectives, their training requirements for membership eligibility, and their codes of ethics meet PACFA's requirements. Whilst this will be a time-consuming process, it is seen as essential if PACFA is to maintain credibility as a body that is concerned with standards and accountability.

Consultation with member organisations will continue about the format and procedures for the National Register of Practitioners. PACFA will seek funds either from government sources or from a philanthropic trust to enable the process of producing the first edition of the Register as rapidly as possible. Links with government departments and other professional organisations will be established. One particular issue that PACFA will

need to respond to urgently is the proposed ‘goods and services tax’ or GST.

A secretariat will be set up, in order that PACFA can operate efficiently and present a credible image to other organisations it deals with. Plans are in hand for establishing an interim office in Melbourne, but the final location will be a matter for careful consideration. A logo and corporate image for PACFA will also need to be developed, along with suitable materials for use in promoting PACFA. A web page will be a priority.

One issue that caused concern prior to the inaugural meeting was how to manage the transitional period from the planning and preparatory work undertaken by the Standing Conference of Educators and Trainers in Counselling and Psychotherapy, the ‘group of 60’ educators and trainers which developed the proposal for PACFA, to PACFA taking responsibility for its own affairs. Part of the solution has been for a number of those involved with the Standing Conference to continue in positions of responsibility with PACFA, but for the first AGM of PACFA to be held at an early date. By the time of the first AGM, scheduled for July 1999, PACFA will be in a better position to choose its own office holders and committee members. Those elected as office holders for the transitional period were:

President: Jim Crawley (Ph: 08 9322 2504; fax 08 9400 5833; email: J.Crawley@cowan.edu.au or jrcrawley@ozemail.com.au); **Vice-President:** Ruth Sturmey (Ph: 03 9261 8700; fax 03 9853 9158; email: Ruth.Sturmeykew@rav.org.au); **Secretary:** Sophie Holmes (Ph: 03 9530 2311; fax 03 9529 4469; email sophie@basil.eng.monash.edu.au); **Treasurer:** Lionel Davis (Ph: 02 9211 2122; fax 02 9211 2172; email Lionel.Davis@cap@mpx.com.au)

The Standing Conference of Educators and Trainers in Counselling and Psychotherapy will be holding its annual conference in Melbourne in April 1999—it will be an open conference with all educators and trainers invited to attend. At this conference a new constitution will be adopted, transforming the Standing Conference into an association for educators and trainers.

Finally, it should be recorded that at the end of the inaugural meeting, Dr Ruth Sturmey, who convened the first meeting of the Standing Conference at Armidale in April 1996, looked back at what had been achieved over the space of only three years. In doing so, she acknowledged the contribution of Hugh Crago, Co-Editor of this journal and then teaching with Ruth at the University of New England. Hugh shared in the initial discussion with Ruth that gave rise to the Standing Conference, and acted as group facilitator for the first three-day conference in April 1996.

JIM CRAWLEY

PACFA President, Member ANZJFT Board