



## **National Standards and Accreditation of Career Practitioners Project**

### **Briefing Paper 3: Implementing National Standards**

This paper has been written as part of the National Standards and Accreditation of Career Practitioners project commissioned through the Career Industry Council of Australia by the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training. The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Education, Science and Training.

*This paper is the third in a series of briefing papers that will be distributed by CICA to all career practitioners who belong to the member associations of CICA. The purpose of these papers is to assist career practitioners to be well informed and updated on the project. Further information on the project maybe downloaded from the CICA website: [www.cica.org.au](http://www.cica.org.au)*

#### **Background**

The Australian career industry is diverse and this is clearly reflected in the membership of CICA. The member associations of CICA represent practitioners in a range of occupations who provide career services to a range of people across the lifespan in a range of settings. Diversity is also reflected in the standards of these associations.

The process of developing nationally agreed standards for such a diverse industry is complex. A one size fits all approach to standards may not be appropriate. Professional associations represent particular constituencies that have particular needs. Therefore while it is desirable that all associations have a set of standards, it is not necessarily desirable that they are identical. However, it is desirable that association standards conform to national guidelines that reflect international best practice. *The need to balance the autonomy and individuality of the professional associations within a framework of nationally agreed standards remains one of the major challenges of the Project.*

#### **How have national quality standards frameworks been implemented elsewhere?**

Many examples exist of quality standards within single nationally based professional associations (e.g., Australian Association of Career Counsellors; Australian Psychological Association, Australian Association of Social Workers). However, there are fewer examples of quality standards frameworks operating across diverse professional groups. Two examples will be presented here that illustrate how diverse associations may be united under a common framework of quality standards while at the same time customising standards to reflect the specialised nature of their work or constituency. Two examples will be described here, specifically The Federation of Professional Associations in Guidance and the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia.

#### ***The Federation of Professional Associations in Guidance***

The Federation was formed in the United Kingdom to represent the voice of professionals working in all spheres of career guidance. It has eight founding members which are all professional career associations. In addition, a further seven organisations take part in federation discussions as observers, though they do not all necessarily attend meetings. The Federation publishes a Statement of Common Ethical Principles (See Appendix 1). Each of its member associations abide by their own code of ethics which incorporate the minimum core requirements identified by the federation.

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### ***The Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia***

The Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA) may be described as an "association of associations" that allows the member associations that were already setting standards and promoting professional practice within their own fields of interest to work together and set common standards. There are 42 member associations of PACFA.

The governing body of PACFA is the Council, which consists of two delegates from each member association. The Council elects a 10 member Board. Members of PACFA are required to meet PACFA minimum standards in relation to their structure, ethical standards and training. In addition, each member association must establish a complaints and appeals procedure that includes complaints from the public.

PACFA publishes ethical guidelines that establish minimum standards for ethical practice for psychotherapists and counsellors. It is expected that the PACFA member associations publish their own code which should conform to the guidelines. The PACFA ethical guidelines contain two sections – ethical principles and ethical responsibilities. The six ethical principles represent general statements about ethical practice (See Appendix 2). There are 39 ethical responsibilities that are grouped under 6 headings – responsibilities to clients, exploitation, confidentiality, contracts, responsibilities to self as counsellor, responsibilities to other counsellors, responsibilities to the wider community, and complaint procedure.

### **The Task Ahead**

While the Federation and PACFA provide useful examples of national models, they do not provide the answer for the career industry. These models provide examples of how CICA could meet its challenge of balancing the autonomy and individuality of the professional associations within a framework of nationally agreed standards. Both organisations have adopted their agreed national frameworks to suit their particular constituencies. Similar consideration needs to be given to the career industry. CICA will be considering models such as these presented by the Federation and PACFA as examples of how a national framework of quality standards could be developed within the career industry.

### **References**

- Federation of Professional Associations in Guidance. (2004). *Federation Statement of Common Ethical Principles*. Retrieved July 14, 2005, from <http://www.fedpig.com/Ethical.htm>
- Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (2001). *What is PACFA?* Retrieved July 14, 2005, from <http://www.pacfa.org.au>

## **Appendix 1**

### **Federation Statement of Common Ethical Principles**

Professional Associations within the Federation each abide by their own code of ethics, which incorporates as a minimum the following core requirements of their members:

1. to provide information, advice and guidance which enables individuals to make appropriate and effective decisions about learning and work
2. to understand that the client is at the centre of the process
3. to have qualified and/or competent staff
4. to develop effective working relationships with a range of agencies to facilitate referrals which are in the interests of the client
5. to adhere to quality standards and codes of practice to deliver guidance which:
  - is impartial and client-centred
  - seeks to safeguard confidentiality at all times - disclosure without consent will only occur where there is a legal or 'duty of care' imperative and this is explained to the client
  - ensures that clients develop an awareness of the full range of opportunities open to them
  - is underpinned by a commitment to equality of opportunity, irrespective of race, gender, religion, social class, age, disability or sexual orientation
  - is supported by the provision of accurate, up to date and comprehensive information

(Federation of Professional Associations in Guidance, 2004)

## **Appendix 2**

### **Ethical principles of the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia**

1. Counsellors respect the essential humanity, worth, and dignity of all people and promote this value in their work.
2. Counsellors recognise and respect diversity among people and oppose discrimination and oppressive behaviour.
3. Counsellors respect the privacy of their clients and preserve the confidentiality of information acquired in the course of their work.
4. Counsellors protect the rights of their clients including the right to informed consent.
5. Counsellors take steps to maintain and develop their competence throughout their professional lives.
6. Counsellors abide by the laws of the society in which they practice.

(Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia, 2001)