



Psychotherapy and Counselling  
Federation of Australia

# Annual report summary 2023–2024

Providing high-quality registration and membership services for  
Counsellors, Psychotherapists, and Indigenous Healing Practitioners

[pacfa.org.au](https://pacfa.org.au)

**2024 has been a landmark year for PACFA, marked by significant achievements across our Colleges, competencies, standards, education offerings and strategic collaborations. Our focus on continuous improvement, governance, and the establishment of National Standards for Counsellors and Psychotherapists continues to strengthen PACFA's position as a leader in the mental health sector.**

Our ongoing collaboration with the Australian Department of Health and Aged Care's consulting firm has made significant progress. Monthly meetings from the time the consultation process commenced have been instrumental in shaping a framework that ensures consistent, high-quality therapeutic services for all Australians. We anticipate that the draft National Standards will be released in October 2024, marking a pivotal moment for our field.

2024 has seen PACFA continue its commitment to advancing our standards and the status of our members by meeting the rigorous standards required by the National Alliance of Self-Regulating Health Professions (NASRHP). NASRHP's standards mirror those of the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra), putting our members on an equivalent professional footing with Australia's other allied health practitioners.

The comprehensive reviews of both our Program Accreditation Standards functions (what's required

to train aspiring counsellors, psychotherapists and Indigenous healing practitioners) and Professional Competencies (what's expected of Certified Practising Counsellors) have been key initiatives this year, aligning PACFA's registration processes with NASRHP's framework. These reviews have involved extensive consultations with all stakeholders, including members, reflecting PACFA's dedication to robust accreditation and registration practices. It is these robust standards and practices that position our members for real-world opportunities across a wider range of practice settings in which they are remunerated appropriately.

Parallel to our expectations in relation to professional standards are the high standards we expect from PACFA's governance practices. Our Board and Governance Committee work hard in our ongoing commitment to continuous improvement and good governance and in ensuring that all of PACFA's practices are fair, ethical and robust. I am pleased to report that myself and other directors have

enrolled in the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) Director's Course, from which I recently graduated. PACFA's Constitution and Code of Ethics are also currently in the process of being reviewed to ensure that they reflect best practice and the evolving needs of our members in their chosen profession.

PACFA's ongoing engagement and collaboration with organisations like the Australian Psychological Society, Mental Health Australia and the Black Dog Institute underscore our commitment to enhancing mental health service delivery and align with broader ongoing advocacy efforts within the mental health and related sectors.

PACFA's Colleges have continued to flourish, providing robust certification pathways and fostering professional excellence. The ongoing efforts in accreditation and professional competencies have further solidified our commitment to high standards across the sector. The College of Supervision and the College of Creative and Experiential Therapies (CCET) continue to grow, offering specialised support and recognition for their members, with clearly defined pathways for membership of the Australian College of Relationship Counsellors anticipated early in the new year.



PACFA is steadfast in its commitment to being a diverse and inclusive membership body in which we humbly learn from and effectively navigate the necessity of providing a safe home for historically marginalised communities of practitioners and those they serve. We are grateful for the ongoing leadership and commitment shown by our College of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Healing Practitioners (CATSIHP) and our Diversity in Gender, Body, Kinship and Sexuality (GBKS) Leadership Group. Both of these groups took a lead role at PACFA's Learning from Lived Experience Workshop Series held earlier this year.

Our success this year would not have been possible without the unwavering dedication of our volunteers. From our Accreditation Standards Working Party to our various College, Branch and Interest Group Leadership Groups, our volunteers have played an essential role in advancing PACFA's mission. Their work, often behind the scenes, ensures that our profession continues to meet the highest standards of practice and ethics, and begs the question, "what might you do for your chosen profession?"

Looking ahead, PACFA remains committed to supporting counsellors, psychotherapists, and Indigenous healing practitioners to meet the needs of their communities through the impactful roles that they play within Australia's mental health landscape. Through our strategic initiatives, governance practices, and the tireless efforts of our volunteers, we are well-positioned to continue leading the way in professional excellence and integrity.



Nigel Polak  
President

## Honouring our Life Members

There are a very small number of individuals that have remained a member of PACFA for more than 15 years and have made such a significant contribution to PACFA and their professions that they warrant the honorary title of "Life Member". In the previous year three such honours were bestowed upon past-President Dr Di Stow, former College of Counselling Convenor Pat Bradley, and long-standing former Treasurer George Gintilas. Please join me in congratulating them and welcoming them to the esteemed title of PACFA Life Member.

### Dr Di Stow



Dr Di Stow is a PACFA Clinical Registrant, Mental Health Practitioner, and Accredited Supervisor who for the past 20 years has run a private practice in Hobart specialising

in the area of grief and loss, trauma, anxiety and depression, purpose and meaning. Di was the President of the Psychotherapy and Counselling Association of Tasmania from 2005 to 2015 and remains the Tasmanian Branch delegate on the PACFA Council. Di served as a PACFA volunteer from 2005 to 2024, serving as the member responsible for Member Associations from 2010 to 2012, on the Ethics Committee from 2010 to 2016, as the 2012 Conference Committee Chair, and the PACFA Restructure (2013–2016), Psychotherapy (2018), and Ethics Review (2012–2015) Working Parties. Di was instrumental in leading numerous advocacy campaigns on behalf of her profession including national reviews of the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) and Mental

Health Workforce. As PACFA's vice-President (2014–2016) and then President (2016–2022) Di oversaw the establishment of the College of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Healing Practices (CATSIHP) and PACFA's Governance Committee, PACFA's full membership of Allied Health Professions Australia (AHPA), recruitment of our current CEO in 2021, PACFA's move from Fitzroy North to Carlton in 2022, improved Training Standards, Ethics policies, Program Accreditation processes, the Psychotherapy and Counselling Journal of Australia and the Psychotherapy and Counselling Today magazine.

### Pat Bradley



Pat Bradley is a Registered Clinical Counsellor and Accredited Supervisor with a long history of supporting her profession. In 2014 Pat was appointed Secretary of the Counselling Association of South Australia (CASA), and elected President in 2015. In 2015 she also

joined PACFA's Education Program Accreditation Committee, before being elected to the PACFA Board in 2016 as Counselling Representative and Convenor of the College of Counselling, a position that she held for two subsequent elections and a total of 6 years making innumerable contributions to PACFA and the profession of counselling throughout that time. Pat is appreciated for her wisdom, passion, generosity, humour, authenticity, diligence and hard work.

### George Gintilas



George Gintilas is a Registered Clinical Psychotherapist. George attended the inaugural PACFA Annual General Meeting (AGM) in 1999 and attended every AGM thereafter

bar one! Also, since 1999 he acted as the PACFA Council delegate for the Australian Radix Body Centered Psychotherapy Association (ARBPA) and continues to do so. George was PACFA's elected Treasurer from 2016 to 2022 and sat on the organising Committee for the 2019 PACFA Conference. George is admired for his hard work, his diligent approach to financial reporting that guided PACFA to the healthy position that it finds itself in today, his thoughtfulness, humour and talents as an Elvis impersonator!

# Board



**Nigel Polak**  
President



**Doug Aberle**  
Vice President



**Maree Armansin**  
College of Counselling Convenor



**Professor Judy Atkinson**  
College of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Practices Co-Convenor



**Ass. Prof. Cathy Bettman**  
Research Committee Chair



**Dr Pamela Brear**  
Professional Standards Committee Chair



**Francis Kim**  
Treasurer



**Ernst Meyer**  
College of Psychotherapy Convenor



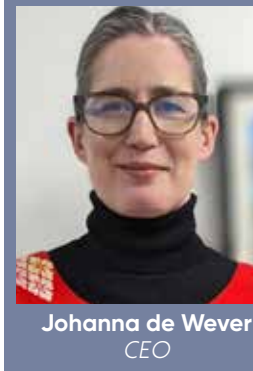
**Helen Phelan**  
Ethics Committee Chair  
(from September 2023)



**Bianca Stawiarski**  
College of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Practices Co-Convenor



**Dr Di Stow**  
Immediate Past President  
(Retired from Board May 2024)



**Johanna de Wever**  
CEO



## PACFA Governance structure



**2023–24 has been an exciting year for PACFA, with remarkable achievements in member growth, quality assurance of registration standards, and strategic government engagement. I'm extremely proud of the work of our members, volunteers and staff and their hard work as they ensure that counselling and psychotherapy remain recognised as highly skilled and expert Allied Health professions.**

PACFA has had significant growth over the last few years, reaching a new membership high of 9604 as of 30 June 2024. These new members have joined at a range of different points in their career journey, but all share PACFA's commitment to reinforcing recognition of the quality and depth of training necessitated to provide counselling and psychotherapy to the community. This appreciation of the importance of the work therapists do is PACFA's reason for existence, and we welcome these new members and their commitment to a robust and rigorous registration.

Core to PACFA's role as self-regulation authority for our members, is the importance of us in turn meeting the standards set by our stakeholders – these include the Allied Health Professions Australia and the National Alliance

of Self-Regulatory Health Care Professionals, as well as Private Health Insurers, funders and government authorities. Each year, just as we audit our members, the PACFA office is audited on our ability to support the compliance of our members with education, CPD, first aid, insurance and supervision requirements, as well as managing our finances and meeting our governance requirements. Our shared diligence in meeting these requirements, along with our members meeting theirs, is essential to achieving our mission. Despite the challenges of a historic system and change management we are hugely proud of our quality assurance results this year, and commit to ongoing continuous improvement.

In the area of documenting standards and practice 2023–24 has been pivotal

with the initiation of projects reviewing and revising our Accreditation Standards for training providers and developing the first set of competencies for Certified Practising Counsellors. These are crucial strategic projects which have spurred dynamic and thoughtful conversations about counselling practice and training. In time these projects will be complemented with similar documents from each of our specialised colleges.

This year has also provided new and exciting opportunities to gain recognition for our members in areas as diverse as veterans support, creative therapy, victims of crime assistance, school counselling and case management. More opportunities are on the horizon as demand for therapists continues to grow. As part of responding to these opportunities, in 2023–24 we have continued to invest in formally recognising the advanced skills of our expert members, and committed to enabling meaningful certification through our colleges: psychotherapy, relationship counselling, creative and experiential therapy, supervision and Indigenous Healing Practices.



CEO Johanna de Wever with members at the South Australia branch event, July 2024. L-R: Pat Bradley, Keshav Pillai, Johanna de Wever, Kristin Soyland, Nina Corlett, Maurite Fober.



CEO Johanna de Wever with members at the Queensland branch event, November 2023. Florence Ee (left), Felipe Oliveira (right).



Head of Practice Sophie Keramidopoulos (Sitting second from right) with the Mental Health Professionals Network.



In many cases this has required a reset by removing historic member categories of 'Affiliates' who had never been formally assessed.

Whilst we understand the disappointment felt by some Affiliates at this necessary step, we sincerely hope that all previous Affiliates will consider joining as full college members once the application pathways are reestablished.

Providing this broad range of member services requires dedicated staff and volunteers. PACFA has a growing team of highly skilled professionals in areas including accreditation, counselling practice, membership management and communications, and I would like to thank them all. While many areas of their work go unseen by our members, it all contributes to a better member experience and a better recognised profession. In this Annual Report we have attempted to highlight the work involved in some of our less known services in order to provide greater transparency regarding

our annual expenditure. PACFA receives no government funding, and is not remunerated for services that we provide for members on behalf of Private Health Insurers. As part of ensuring that we can remain financially sustainable we anticipate testing a commercial partnership framework with appropriate employers and service providers in the 2024/25 period. This will recognise the value of PACFA's relationships with members, as well as ensuring that aligned organisations are able to support the advancement of our strategic work.

It is a great privilege to work with a volunteer-led Board, and I am truly thankful to our Directors and other volunteers who devote many hours to PACFA, in the form of Board, Committee and Leadership meetings, discussions with staff and drafting and discussing documentation. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the huge number of hours that our President Nigel Polak puts into PACFA every week.

Looking ahead to 2024-25 I would like to emphasise my optimism and enthusiasm. The National Standards for Counsellors and Psychotherapists are due to be published mid 2025, and the clarity of minimum standards is likely to provide a significant boost to the sector. PACFA has been well represented in the consultations and we believe our members are well placed for any recommendations. We look forward to working collaboratively with the federal government to ensure that the Australian community has greater access to high quality counselling and psychotherapy services for years to come.



Johanna de Wever  
CEO



**PACFA Staff as of September 2024**

From back, L-R: Nikitha Xavi, Janelle Richardson, Sean Scanlon, Linda Zutitis, Sitong Pan, Noah Saifa, Luke Neri, Jeff Megahan, Alicia Perry, Irina Sergeeva, Sophie Keramidopoulos, Marsha Gomez, Jineen Basheer, Jessica Hazell, Johanna de Wever, Nghi Robinson.

Not pictured: Elliott Ainley, Lauren Butler, Rachel Friebel, Alex Roberts.

## Key activities 2023–24

- ✓ PACFA continued to advocate for our membership to the Federal Government Department of Health regarding National Standards of registration for Counsellors and Psychotherapists in line with PACFA's requirements.
- ✓ **NASRHP Membership and Standards Review:** continued to meet the requirements set out by NASRHP through their annual monitoring process.
- ✓ Initiated a **comprehensive review of program accreditation standards** to ensure alignment with evolving professional requirements, with revised standards expected to be approved by December 2024.
- ✓ Initiated a **Professional Competencies Review** in March 2024 to establish professional competencies for counselling registration, supporting PACFA's goal of achieving full NASRHP membership.
- ✓ Participated in **Scope of Practice review with Federal Government.**
- ✓ Continued to build on partnerships and advocacy efforts, including securing **new partnerships with DVA, education Victoria, Victims of Crime Victoria** and expanded the recognition of PACFA's standards within the sector.
- ✓ Successfully launched the **Credly digital credentialing and badge program**, allowing members to digitally showcase their qualifications and certifications, with plans to expand its use for college certification.
- ✓ Increased the **efficiency of the PACFA website by over 40%** to accommodate the 102,000 site visits. Rolled out major aesthetic updates to the PACFA website including new application pathway pages and College pages to make important information more accessible.
- ✓ Announced an additional **three lifetime members**, Pat Bradley, Di Stow and George Gintalis.
- ✓ The PACJA website received a significant increase in traffic with over **52,000 individual site visits** over the financial period.
- ✓ Worked with the **Australian Bureau of Statistics** to contribute to their definition of Counselling.
- ✓ Advocated to the **National Disability Insurance Agency** on behalf of our therapists.
- ✓ PACFA continued to enhance member services with a more accessible Jobs Board and Rooms for Rent service and more content to **support registration and membership.**



## Membership

- ✓ In 2023–24, PACFA welcomed **2,897 new members**, including **1,124 Registrants**.
- ✓ These new members brought the **total membership to 9,604** as of June 30, 2024.
- ✓ The Registration application process was streamlined, reducing the timeframe from **6–8 weeks to 4–5 weeks**.
- ✓ More than **1,700 Private Health Fund applications** were processed across **16 different funds**, three times as many as the previous year.
- ✓ Onboarded three new insurers – **Teachers Health, Nurses & Midwives Health, and Unihealth** – offering rebates for PACFA members.
- ✓ The membership team conducted audits on **7.8% of Registrants**.
- ✓ Launched a significant new Membership Campaign, resulting in **270 new registrants**.
- ✓ Processed over **1400 applications with a 86% conversation rate** to membership registration.
- ✓ Processed **266 registration upgrades** from Certified Practising Counsellor to Registered Clinical Counsellor.
- ✓ Ran a Graduate Membership Campaign targeted at current Student members resulting in **328 new members**.
- ✓ Introduced an **ACA Transfer pathway** that attracted significant interest.
- ✓ Membership team answered over **13,000 phone calls and emails** throughout the year.



\* All these funders provide rebates for eligible PACFA registrants



## Colleges & Practice

- ✓ Published new **Good Practice Guidelines** based on feedback from Ethics service and member questions *Privacy, intake and consent in private practice*.
- ✓ Launched **PACFA Community with two communities** – Applying for Registration and College of Creative and Experiential Therapies.
- ✓ Ethics service responded to **255 ethical advice enquiries and 50 concerns**.
- ✓ Responded to **154 practice support enquiries**.
- ✓ Appointed **a new project officer for the College of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Practices**
- ✓ Undertook a significant review and update of the **College of Psychotherapy membership pathway** with the CoP Leadership Group
- ✓ **Introduced a member assessment panel** to the College of Creative and Experiential Therapies and College of Psychotherapy
- ✓ **Re-established a leadership group** for the Australian College of Relationship Counsellors.

## Education & Accreditation

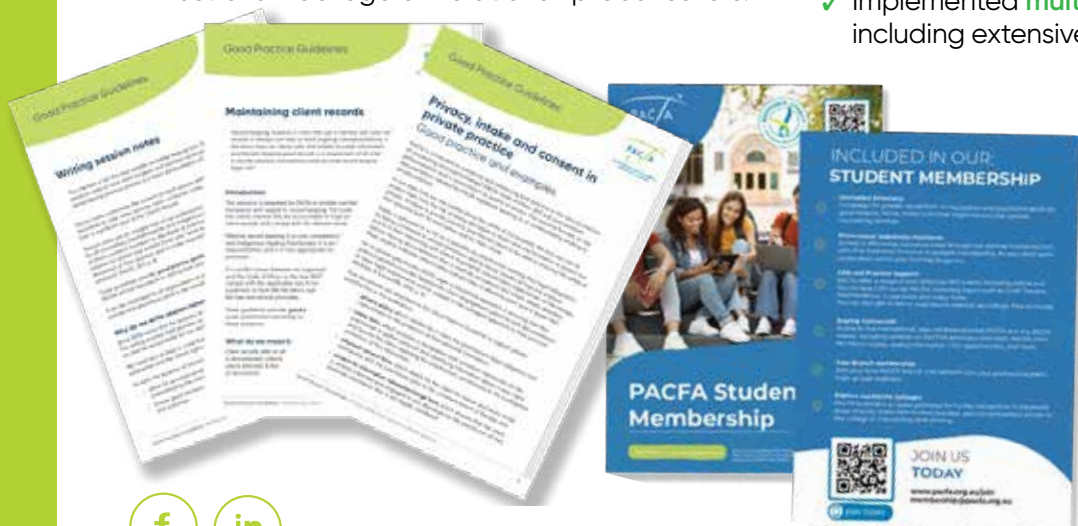
- ✓ Initiated a **review of accreditation standards**.
- ✓ Undertook a **literature review of evidence for the efficacy of online and face to face training** for counselling and psychotherapy.
- ✓ Introduced a **new policy for volunteers** to access complementary CPD.
- ✓ Completed a review of the **CPD course endorsement guidelines**.
- ✓ Endorsed a total of **211 programs from 78 different providers** and issued 10 new license agreements.
- ✓ Supported volunteers to host **51 events and 9 short courses**.
- ✓ Registered **6,285 people** at PACFA community CPD events.
- ✓ Enabled **2,495 downloads** of PACFA Community CPD Webinars.
- ✓ Supported **35 accredited programs** across 23 providers.
- ✓ Supported volunteers to host the **Lived Experience Leadership Series** in June 2024, attended by more than 120 delegates.
- ✓ Implemented **new student and graduate recruitment communication** materials for stakeholders.
- ✓ Implemented **multi-channel recruitment campaigns** including extensive social media advertising.



PACFA's 2024 Outstanding Graduate Prize winners Laiba Amir (top) and Maybelle Swaney with Nghi Robinson (PACFA Head of Education) presenting the award.



CEO Johanna de Wever and CoP Deputy Convenor Jodie Gale with Janet Hay of Te Poari o ngā Kaihaumanu Hinengaro o Aotearoa/Psychotherapists Board of Aotearoa New Zealand (PBANZ).



# Key membership data for 2023–2024 (as of 30 June 2024)

Categories of Registration and Membership	
Registered Clinical Counsellors	2534
Certified Practising Counsellors	2635
<b>Total registrants</b>	<b>5169</b>
Affiliate members	89
Academic members	9
Honorary Life	8
Student members	4329
<b>Total members</b>	<b>9604</b>

Branches	
ACT Branch Members	183
NSW Branch Members	3504
NT Branch Members	46
Queensland branch members	1547
South Australian branch members	658
Tasmanian branch members	153
Victorian branch members	2392
Western Australian branch members	930
Overseas members	191
<b>Grand total of members</b>	<b>9604</b>

College membership	
College of Counselling	9519*
College of Psychotherapy	169
Australian College of Relationship Counsellors	66
College of Supervision	401
College of Creative and Experiential Therapies	11

\*includes student members

Member Association members	
Australian Association of Buddhist Counsellors and Psychotherapists	13
Australian Transactional Analysis Association	7
Association of Soul Centred Psychotherapists	4
Association of Transpersonal and Experiential Psychotherapist	16
Australian and Aotearoa New Zealand Psychodrama Association	11
Australian Radix Body Centered Psychotherapy Association	15
Christian Counsellors Association of Australia	271

Total Members: **9604**

Total Registrants: **5169**

**2897** new members joined in 2023–2024



# Treasurer's report 2023–24

## Audited financial statements

PACFA's financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2024 were prepared by independent auditors, Saward Dawson Chartered Accountants. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Australian Accounting Standards, the Associations Incorporation Act 1991 (ACT), and the Australia Charities and Non-Profits Commission Act 2012. Thank you to Saward Dawson and to Better Business Basics and PACFA team for successful completion of the audit.

## Income and expenditure analysis

The growth in revenue in 2023–24 of 22% overall was principally from a membership growth increase of 30% and increased professional development income of 6%. Both of these figures reflect strong membership growth and retention which is pleasing in a competitive sector.

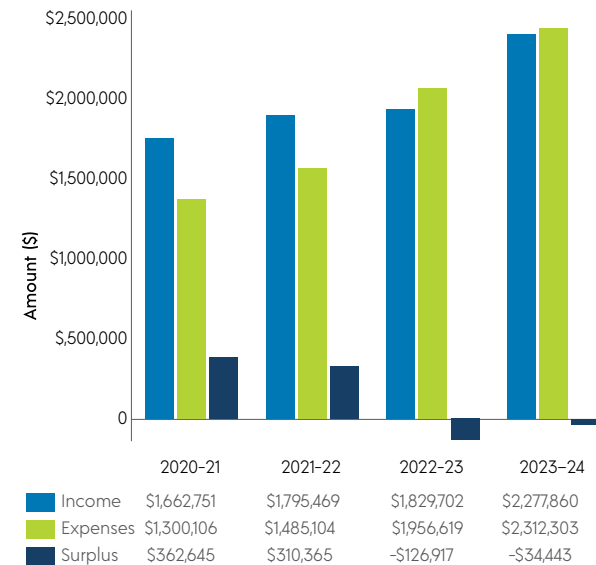
As seen in the graph below analysis of the cost of membership and registration through comparable Allied Health organisations indicates that PACFA's pricing remains good value and competitive. We were fortunate that the interest rates on term deposits rose during the year, which brought additional income to the organisation of approx \$49k.

The largest expenditure item for PACFA for many years has been staffing (66%) due to the high level of member-facing services and the complex administrative requirements of registration and accreditation. In 2023–24 PACFA has invested additional funds in building a strong team to deliver the best outcomes for the members. Our spend on staff and oncosts was up over last financial year by 25% due to inflationary pressures pushing up wages, a tight labor market and and this investment in staff to enable organisational growth.

In 2023–24 we projected a deficit budget of \$160k, but delivered a deficit of \$34k.

This year we have provided additional information for members in our financial reporting related to expenditure. The Expenditure graph includes a breakdown of wages and associated oncosts (ie., superannuation) by team function to provide greater clarity relating to services which are not directly offset by income ie., ethics and concern management, private health insurance assessment, governance and advocacy. Apart from staffing other expenditure relates to website and database infrastructure, support for Board and committees, travel and meeting expenses and special project support.

Income and expenses with previous years' figures



## Balance sheet

The deficit of \$34,443 in 2023/24 was budgeted for and possible due to well managed reserves from previous years. Total assets increased by \$215,773 and liabilities increased by \$250,216 with an overall decrease in equity of \$34,443.

The Board has invested some of the reserves in 2023/2024 financial year to pursue our mission and priority agenda. Importantly reserves remain at an acceptable level for a non-profit organisation the size of PACFA.

Going forward the Board aims to fund growth of services for members and invest in additional staffing and expertise to meet member and sector expectations. This will mean that reserves will stabilise over the next 5-year period as gains are reinvested.

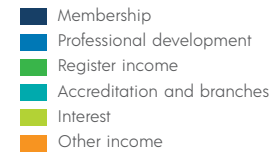
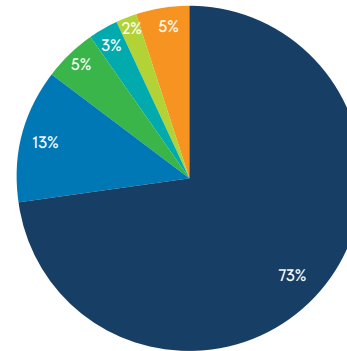
## The wages and oncosts breakdown for 2023–2024 reflects PACFA strategic focus on service delivery, member support, and operational efficiency.

Membership and registration services are the largest share of PACFA's staffing allocation. This reflects the organisation's priority on member engagement and support, crucial for building a thriving community of psychotherapy and counselling professionals. These roles include staff dedicated to handling new memberships, assessing private health insurance applications, managing quality assurance, and facilitating membership renewals.

The growth of education services is a key focus for PACFA's operational plan, with significant funds allocated to roles supporting the development and delivery of an enhanced accreditation function for training providers in core and advanced training. This team also supports Community CPD delivery and manages CPD endorsement.

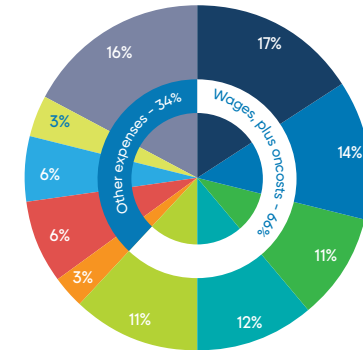
Advocacy remains a priority with investment in strategic relationships with government and employers as well as increased marketing and communications to support recruitment of new members and registrants.

## Income 2023–24



## Expenses 2023–24

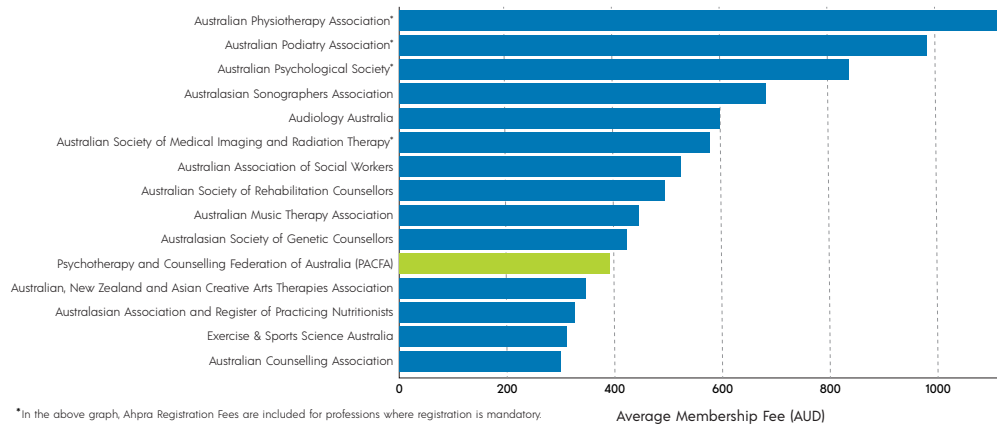
(Wage breakdown by area)



As an organisation committed to setting standards for the profession, PACFA allocates significant resources to ethics and practice support. This includes staff who work with volunteers to provide clinical guidance, support colleges in setting certification and oversee the ethics advice and concern management process.

Good governance and finance play an essential role in PACFA's organisational structure, ensuring that its operations run smoothly and adhere to compliance requirements. This allocation enables staff overseeing financial management, regulatory reporting, and organisational governance, ensuring PACFA's long-term sustainability and transparency.

## Membership Fees for Allied Health Organisations



## Conclusion

PACFA's significant growth in income over this period is a positive indication of strategic alignment with the market.

Whilst expenditure has increased, the distribution of wages reflects its core priorities: serving members through robust registration, supporting the effective accreditation of education, advocating for the profession, and maintaining high standards.

The balanced allocation toward governance and finance highlights the organisation's commitment to operational integrity and sustainability, ensuring it can continue to provide these critical services to members.

Analysis of the cost of membership from comparative membership and registration bodies indicates that PACFA's pricing remains competitive.

Francis Kim  
PACFA Treasurer



PACFA exists to support its members and the community by regulating the training and practice of Psychotherapy, Counselling and Indigenous Healing Practices to the highest standards of safety, quality and professionalism.

Regulating includes certification, registration, accreditation, and complaints management.



[pacfa.org.au](https://pacfa.org.au)