

FINDING YOUR FIRST COUNSELLING ROLE TRANSCRIPT

So I am really excited now to introduce you to our first session of PACFA experts, PACFA members, to kind of kick the conversation off.

We have Lulu, who's a private practice relationship counsellor who also works in alcohol and drug treatment, supporting clients through complex challenges, including trauma, addiction and recovery.

We have Alyssa, bringing extensive experience as a counsellor, supervisor, and director of Eating Disorders Australia, alongside her work supporting practitioners through training and supervision.

Oh, guys, I've just jumped... No, I'm on the right session, aren't I?

And we have Sophie, it said session two, who's drawing on her 10 years of counselling experience, and she works with PACFA as the head of practice, overseeing our work in ethics with the colleges and assisting with professional standards.

So I'm going to ask each of our panellists to just talk a little bit about themselves, and their current counselling role, and then we've got some questions that we're going to run through. And of course, we encourage your questions in the Q&A and any additional thoughts and comments from the panellists as they move through.

Lulu, would you mind if I started with you?

Yeah, thanks. Thank you so much to PACFA for putting this on, and Daniel for his rousing opening. This is just a general intro about me. This is my second career. I was a dietician previous to becoming a counsellor.

I worked extensively in mental health nutrition and addiction nutrition, worked with a lot of people who identified as food addicts. Those of us who know the DSM know that's not actually a diagnosis, but I worked with a lot of people who identified in that space.

And in my work as a dietician, I realized nobody's paying attention to my diet plans. Those behaviour change mechanisms are kind of a layer deeper, and that's what really propelled me to go and pursue my counselling degree.

And it all builds on each other in terms of how we're taking care of our bodies, how we're taking care of our minds.

So I graduated two years ago May from University of Queensland with a Master's of Counselling, and I've been working as a counsellor even previous to that when I was still in my studies. But yeah, now I'm across both a private practice group, not an individual private practice. I know that's going to be a question later today.

I'm in a private practice group, and I work in a charity, and that's been a nice balance for me at this point.

Thanks, Lulu.

Alyssa, would you mind giving us a little bit of information about you and your journey?

Sure. I studied psychology originally and then I did my Master of Counselling. I think I finished in 2018.

I now work in private practice, majority of which is online. I feel like COVID really changed that or made it more normal, in a sense. And that gave me the opportunity to start private practice.

And then I'm a clinical supervisor at Lifeline, which I love, and then a supervisor outside of that. So yeah, getting to support people on their journeys as they start counselling, particularly early in their career, is just such a privilege, which I love as well.

And it's been so interesting seeing the different types of roles counsellors are in these days as well, and I hear from my supervisees things I never would've imagined, or I think there's so many more things we get to do in the community now, which weren't a thing maybe a while ago.

Fantastic. I think it'd be interesting to dig into some of those different options a little bit in the conversation because there are so many things going on that people don't necessarily recognize that they could pursue.

Sophie, would you mind giving us your introduction, please?

Yeah, no problem. Hi, everyone.

I was always interested in mental well-being, but I never knew what kind of role I really wanted to do. And so I went a bit into the sciences to start with and then went on a bit of a Greece holiday and went to see my family and decided that counselling was it for me.

But it was my first career, and I started working through a call centre at a sexual health and reproductive service. And then once I graduated, was mainly doing phone counselling, and then started working face-to-face in a family and mediation centre.

So that gave me a bit of a broader experience. And so I had a lot of experience on telehealth prior to COVID. It felt quite natural for me, whereas a lot of people that I was around me weren't sure, not how to do it, but it was a bit of a culture shock for them.

So yeah. I graduated, I think, in 2014, so it was about 10 years of working for different organisations, and working my way through them. So I started as a counsellor and then worked into management of a national counselling service, which was a whole different experience as well.

Fantastic. Okay. Well, look, maybe we could start with the nuts and bolts of what was your first counselling job, for each of you, and how did you get it?

And any advice for people around that pathway or what you might be thinking about in retrospect. Lulu?

Yeah. Thanks, Johanna.

My first counselling job was at a very high-end private rehabilitation centre for alcohol and drugs. This was right before COVID hit.

I was barely qualified in the sense of I had just started my counselling studies at UQ, but it was in my neighbourhood, and I knew I wanted to make that switch, so I put my hand in the air. I put my CV into the... pile.

And I think at that time, partly because of also my nutrition background, that felt like a good fit for that high-end space.

They did hire me on. I attribute all this mostly to chutzpah. I did not think I was qualified, didn't think I would get the job, but I figured I'm just going to start practicing applying for things and showing up for interviews if I get them.

So that was my first proper counselling job. I did get hired as a counsellor at that residential centre. They didn't make it through COVID, so it was a short-lived counselling job.

But I think that speaks to the benefit of that prior clinical training that you had.

Yeah, absolutely. And even though that job was, I don't know, let's say six months, but then it set me up with that little bit of history so that the second job, that second job I still retain in a different way today because it's grown and evolved and deepened. But when I had the opportunity to apply as a counsellor at a charity drug and alcohol organization, I had something on my CV to say that I'd worked in that space before.

I went in for that second job, second interview, still not feeling like I could tick all the boxes or that I had all of the background, all of the expertise. But that little first step, short though it was, gave me enough ground to go for that second step, and I secured that position, and I'm still with that organization, but my role has changed and grown and expanded since then.

And I think that also speaks to the unique scope of practice that often exists in counsellors, depending on their previous knowledge and experience, and to the evolving nature of a scope of practice as your counselling training is completed, and you're moving into a different area of skill and expertise.

Alyssa, would you be able to talk to us about your first counselling role and how that came about?

Yeah, sure. My first role was on an eating disorder helpline, and I was lucky in a sense because I got the job before I graduated, just a couple of weeks before I graduated.

But I'd also put that down to throughout my master's degree, I was regularly looking at what jobs were out there, what things would I be interested in, what was their criteria, what are they looking for.

And so I was aware of that. It wasn't like I got to the end of my degree and then it was a shock in a sense.

I also used that time as a student to do some professional development that was outside of my master's in areas that I was interested in. And if you are still a student, it's a great time to do PD because it's often a student rate. You save a whole bunch of money and get the same training.

So therefore, I could show that I'd done extra training related to the areas that I was interested in and wanting to go in as well.

And I had a lot of volunteer experience by that point at Lifeline as well. So I guess I'm a big advocate of whether you're still studying, or you've graduated, if you can find some kind of opportunities or volunteering, it just sets you apart from everyone else who may have the same degree.

So if there's any opportunities for volunteering or learning skills in that sense, if you can take them, can be helpful too.

Great. And so I'm curious if someone would like to tell me what the biggest surprise was about working in counselling versus counselling training, or what maybe your counselling course didn't teach you that you think maybe they should have.

Sophie?

Yeah. So I think for me, it was what my style was going to be.

I really had to grow that as I was working with different people. I knew there was going to be, I learned different techniques and different tools and different things that I was going to use. And in my placement, I got to put them into practice a bit.

But when I started my first role, that was where I was really putting it all into place properly. And I had such a broad, I guess, a diverse client base to start with, and that was a bit different to what I expected.

I thought I would go in, I'd have the certain type of client presenting in with X issues and, or concerns, and I would be able to work with that. And it wasn't that at all.

Alyssa or Lulu, anything in relation to that?

I just want to add to what Sophie's saying, how the humans you work with don't follow exactly what you've been taught.

Life happens in between sessions and, the case conceptualization you think it is suddenly changes and, yeah, working with actual complex humans, it's different than as you think it's going to be nice and simple in the essay that you write, but it's not like that.

I would just also add, I think a learning curve for me was working in jobs and organizations that normally it's not a Monday 9 to 5.

Charities or not-for-profits, or you're waiting for funding, or it's working late nights, or it's working on the weekends, or it's part-time, because if you do it five days a week, you burn out maybe doing one particular job.

But there's just so many nuances, I think, to working in the area, too.

Yeah. Does anyone have any thoughts about what-

Wait. I want to double-click on that as well. Yes, the people are different than I've expected them to be, both in terms of my clients, but also in terms of my colleagues.

I think I may have had an idea that we're all in the counselling mental health space, so it's all going to be easy breezy, kind and lovely.

And in both of my first two jobs, I had some difficult interactions with colleagues. Mental health practitioners, difficult. I was fortunate to have a real sense of support and backing from my organizations to manage that.

But I think there was a naivete, in my perspective, traipsing off into the counselling world.

I agree with Alyssa, especially in the charity space, those short-term rolling contracts are something to be aware of when you're doing your own planning about the whole rest of your life.

Yeah. I know one of my contracts runs out in June. That's how it goes, and I'll be having those conversations and getting set for whatever the next step is.

But because of the nature of grant funding, they can feel a bit more precarious than having the full-time guaranteed secure position.

And likewise, with private prac, there's a precarity there as well.

In my charity role, I get paid whether the client shows up or not.

In my private prac role, if somebody no-shows or that session doesn't get booked in the first instance, I don't get paid.

So having to have a different perspective to financial planning to what I might have done when I was just a full-time working dietician, 9:00 to 5:00, this is my job, this is my pay check every week.

There's a little bit more fluidity or organicity that I have to take into account when I'm doing my own personal planning.

Yes, and that's something that we're going to be talking about a fair bit today overall, is just simply the level of complexity that faces counselors on graduation because the job market and the market for private practice are both complex, difficult, and changing environments at the moment.

And so I think that's really important that we acknowledge, and that's one of the reasons why Daniel's presentation was so prescient, is that it is a bit of a mountain to climb.

Luckily, once you've got to the top, things are looking a bit better for us than they do for him.

But there is no doubt that there is hard work to be done in many cases. Not always, but in many cases.

Now, I've just got a couple of questions from the audience here.

So I think a really good one is, could we have some advice about what the most sensible first job might be for a graduating counsellor, either to aim for or what would be a really good place for them to base their skills?

Alyssa?

I guess I always encourage, especially when I'm supervising students, to try and get into some kind of organization.

I know there's some people who may go to private practice quickly, but that can be quite lonely.

Even me, I'm 18 years in, and I work for an organization, otherwise I would get too lonely or I wouldn't have that kind of connection.

So if you can work for some kind of organization, there's that kind of guaranteed pay check and that kind of support around you.

And just being open to lots of different things.

There's lots of helplines around these days that take counsellors. There's pilot projects. I worked as a health coach for a pilot project around supporting people reducing their alcohol.

And so it wasn't a job title where I was like, "Yes, counselling role," but it ended up being a counselling role, so just being open to different roles as well.

Mental health support roles, and not being afraid to combine it with something that may not be related.

Like my own counsellor, who's amazing, is also a Pilates instructor.

And I think that's helped her be a counsellor for so many years because it's not five, six days a week counselling, because that's pretty intense.

So if you've done other jobs in the past or you're just interested in, there's people who are receptionists at psychology practices just to balance out the impact that counselling has on you.

So just being open to whole bunch of different opportunities. There's always learning somewhere.

Lulu, Sophie, do you have anything about suggestions for a first job?

Yeah. Look, I started in a call centre.

I was lucky I had a friend who worked for the organization I started with, in the call centre, and she knew they had a counselling team.

And so I joined. I was really honest. I basically said, "I've got heaps of call centre experience," because that's what I was doing while I was studying.

And I said, "I want this job so I can be a counsellor."

There wasn't a position open for a while, so I did their intake, which was great because it taught me everything that I needed to know about intake and the forms and how important they are.

And then I started working more on their projects as well, so helping them with risk assessments and doing all of those bits and pieces before I actually started taking the calls.

I was still using my training.

And that meant when I started doing the work there, by the time I went to my next organization, I had a huge level of experience that I could bring with me.

And that was by doing things around the counselling in that organization before I even stepped into the counselling.

So I think if you know people who are working in other industries and they know someone works for Medibank and they know Medibank has counsellors and they can

start at a different position with the goal of getting into the counselling team or something adjacent, it's a huge step in.

Yeah.

And I think that answers a little bit of one of the other questions we've got here, which specifically flags the fact that it's very common to see job advertisements requiring two years experience.

And that is a real barrier for people.

And I'd be interested in people's thoughts about that.

I think a comment I would make about that is it's worth still applying, particularly if counselling is your second career.

But also because you can use often experience you've gained in other areas or other sectors as part of meeting that requirement.

And I think what we're hearing here is a need to be flexible and to be multifaceted in your counselling development.

Lulu, have you got any thoughts about how to address that two-year barrier in particular?

Yeah, it's getting your foot in the door.

The job that I started with at the charity I'm with now, it wasn't counselling, it was much more, I guess, casework heavy, more on the floor, helping support people in residential rehab because they're angry that their roommate stole their socks.

I'm like, "This is not counselling."

But getting those chops in, getting my foot in the door there, as well as everything else I was doing, doing PACFA trainings, doing my own ongoing development, and building those relationships with the colleagues around me have moved me forward to the place where, in the same organization, I'm now in a very overt counselling role, working with dual diagnosis, complex clients.

I could not have started there.

So it was getting my foot in the door somewhere adjacent and building those relationships and that trust in me as a professional over time, that allowed me to then develop and grow and move toward a more patently counselling kind of position.

Sophie, we've got a question here about someone who seems to be a bit concerned that graduating with a bachelor is limiting, and that they are worried about how to get their 750 hours.

I think probably from a PACFA perspective, we can say that's a challenge that everyone goes through. And people do get there, so it's not impossible.

But do you have any kind of thoughts based on what you've seen with PACFA members about those first couple of years and obtaining those 750 hours to get to registered clinical counsellor?

Yeah. Well, I think the first part is it might take you longer than two years, and that's okay because you want to be able to-- If you go into it going, "I'm going to get as many client hours as I possibly can, as quick as I can," you're not necessarily focusing on the experience that you're gaining and growing your scope in the way that you need to grow your scope and your supervision and all the work that goes into it.

So it's actually quite common for it to take longer than two years.

But in those first two years, what you're trying to do is set yourself up to understand exactly where your scope is now that you're doing the work, to understand what work you want to do.

So I was really interested in sexual health. It was my niche. Sorry, my monitors are going on and off.

And to have your supports around you.

And so if you can do all of that while building up your client hours, and focusing on building those steadily, then you'll find that as either your practice builds or when you are in the organization, you're getting more and more clients, you actually get those last several hundred pretty quickly.

It's just the start that feels really, really slow.

And I think that's why if you're looking at it as just number of hours, it might be a bit long. It might seem really long.

But if you think about what you're getting in that space, learning all the admin or if you're working for an organization, what else you're learning about either the client journey, which is going to help you with your counselling client, or the other team members, which will help you be a part of a multidisciplinary team, which you might need further in your career as well.

We often work in those spaces.

If you're building up your referral network, that will help you in the long term.

But it does take a little bit longer than two years, in general.

It's probably the first bit, but it's just that start that feels really long, and then it gets better.

Lulu?

Yeah. So I'm right on the cusp of making that switch over, and my experience has been that it doesn't matter.

Having graduated, being a PACFA member, those were Bonafide's that helped me get my foot in the door and get established in these different areas.

And I'm seeing clients and I'm clocking those hours, and at some point, I'll tick over, May, because I can't do it sooner because I graduated two years ago May.

But the only place I see an actual practical difference in the sense of how I'm received professionally is that certainly in my private prac, there are people who want to be able to utilize their workplace cover, their Bupa, whatever their extra cover is that might provide for some offset on the cost of counselling.

That will become more robust and more accessible for them once I do make that tip over.

But just in terms of working in the field, working with clients every day, building up that expertise and that experience and working with my supervisor and working it through, particularly in the charity space, that hasn't mattered at all.

Mm-hmm.

Yeah. The clients just don't know the difference.

The only place I've seen that clients really know the difference is that if they're wanting to use their extra cover to offset the cost.

Yeah. And I do think that PACFA is really-encourages new graduates and new certified practicing counsellors to seek employment.

And employers should be looking to employ CPCs.

They should not be requiring people to be a registered clinical counsellor.

And I think that is something that will become more and more widely implemented as the national standards roll through.

And that will be something that should really help the profession more broadly.

Alyssa, you mentioned CPD and other training and taking advantage of those whilst either training or in the early years of a career.

Is there any particular things that you would really encourage people to look at back or consider?

Oh, and this is the opportunity to mention PACFA CPD for everyone who hasn't already looked at it.

PACFA has online CPD available pretty much every week at a really ... They're like \$37.

So, it's really cheap, really cost-effective, and it's delivered by your expert peers.

So, if people aren't already using that opportunity, I do encourage them to do so.

Alyssa?

Yeah. I would just recommend doing things you're not even sure you're interested in, because I think sometimes you can be taken by surprise.

I left my degree being like, "Grief is a major area I want to work in," which has been the case, but I specialize more in trauma now than I do in grief.

And so learning more about trauma and even doing my own personal work in counselling helped me go, "Oh, I'm actually really interested in trauma."

And then doing little bits of professional development going, "Oh, this really fits with my understanding of myself and people," and that makes sense as well.

I just finished PACFA's PD on working with sexual health issues as well, and again, not an area I thought I would go into, but found it fascinating and found I was having conversations with clients here and there anyway, and then I felt more equipped.

But again, it's not something I definitely went researching or looking out for.

I just went, "Oh, that's kind of interesting."

So yeah, just being open to learning new things, because you may go down a different path than you expect to.

And could we perhaps get some advice for people for how to deal with the transition between study and real life, and what advice you'd give back to yourself if you could travel back in time.

Sophie?

Was it study and real life in-

Yes, study and real life. I think I mean study and working.

Yeah. Look, I think my biggest thing was I didn't realize how much self-care would play a part.

I thought I was already doing a lot, but I don't think I quite understood what my techniques were and if I could go back to past me, I think I was prepared that I was going to have a client load.

I was prepared that I was going to be working with people.

I was so excited that I was going to be helping people, and I was going to be talking about it all the time, and there was a lot of excitement.

But past me did not think about the effect that it would necessarily have on me, because I'd had conversations about all of this stuff with family, with friends.

I thought, "Yeah, I can deal with it. I'll be okay."

But yeah, so my biggest tip or thing that helped me the most was I ended up with a music list based on my mood or what mood I needed to change, and that was life-changing for me.

It's such a small thing but yeah, I just didn't think about it till it was way further down.

What a great idea. Thank you.

Lulu?

I guess I would just say we can do all this study and it's good that we do.

That makes us appropriate caretakers of people who are in vulnerable circumstances, whatever brings that into our rooms, and yet all of my classes, all of my frameworks, all of that, setting that aside to just be with that person in their journey, anybody can do that.

The literature shows that students can do that just as well as somebody with 20 years experience in the field, right?

I spend that time before a client comes in, or often for me, a couple, I spend that time trying to organize my understanding of the situation and use my frameworks and everything I've learnt and studied for, but then setting that aside, I am just here with this person who's in my room because they're struggling and in pain.

And that's the most important thing we can do, regardless of whether we studied this or that model or this or that school or what have you.

Alyssa?

Yeah, I would just say a bit more self-compassion for myself or anyone going through that transition, because some people are great adapting to change, and I feel like most of us aren't.

And it's a big change.

It looks very different regardless of what you do, and I think sometimes we have this expectation of, "Well, I was working and studying five days a week or six days a week, so therefore if I go do one job or two jobs, that's also the same amount of time. It's the same."

And it's very different.

And it takes a lot of energy, mentally, emotionally, to adjust, to change, to get used to doing something new.

And so I think a bit of compassion that if you need a couple of extra naps on the weekend or a bit more downtime or whatever, that's perfectly reasonable.

And don't panic if you have those moments of, "I don't know what I'm doing" or, "I can't do this."

I think that's very normal.

One of my supervisors who's been doing this for 40 years, he says now and then, he works from home, he has moments of going, "I'm quitting. I'm not doing this anymore."

He goes into the kitchen, tells his wife, and his wife now knows to go, "Okay, dear," because the next day he's like, "Okay, I'll keep going."

And so we don't necessarily get rid of that feeling, I think, for most of us in the career.

And I'd just really encourage your own support.

Whether you go to counselling yourself or you use extra supervision, group individual during those early stages, just don't sit there feeling like this on your own because I promise you, you're not the only one feeling whatever you're feeling.

Fantastic.

Another question from the audience.

Outside of supervision, do any of you have mentors who work in the sector already or even outside the sector, that you've used since you started?

And certainly one thing I'm always interested in is the role that PACFA can and does play in that, in enabling people to come together, and in building those relationships and recognizing sometimes that's harder in the online world.

It's one of the reasons I think we have a consistent drive for face-to-face CPD, is the actual benefit of being in the room with other people.

Anything that you would like to comment on in relation to mentors or supervisors?

At my private practice group, we have a monthly get-together with the five of us.

It's loosely focused. We might have a topic, but it's just that opportunity to come together and talk about what's up for any of us.

I don't get CPD or supervision credits for that time, but it's so meaningful because as was mentioned earlier, it can be lonely in private practice.

So the fact that we all come together in that space and just have a whinge, have a chat, it helps me feel more connected as I go through the rest of the month in that room, that building.

But it also lets me know I'm not alone with what I'm struggling with in session or with self of therapist kind of stuff, and I also have that with my charity.

Again, another benefit for me in working in an organization half the time is that unlike private practice, where I may not see my fellow counsellor in the other room all day long, in the organizational space, I'm going to run into somebody over lunch or when I need to and I had a rough session, I can find somebody else whose door is open and just be like, "Wah."

So those are all informal sources of support and allyship and mentorship that have been so important and so meaningful for me.

I think we're getting a real theme here about community and peer support, and the difficulty of working in a profession that can sometimes be a bit isolating.

And we're hearing a lot of questions in the questions, I was going to say in the chat, but that would be misleading you all.

We're getting a lot of questions about the difficulty of getting started.

So, are there any tips that you have for how to make your application stand out when you were first getting in there?

And anything that you would be looking for if you were looking to recruit or appoint someone else, that might be helpful.

Sophie?

Yeah, look, I think going to network meetings can be really helpful when you're first starting because it gives you a good sense of different people that you might end up working with, but also helping you with connections.

I think with people, if I was looking or when I was managing and I was looking to hire people, I was looking for people who they had their qualification, but you could really get a sense of what they then were also interested in because they had either done CPD or they had done some short courses, and it was helping to round off whether it was in risk assessment or whether it was in a particular area.

You could get a sense, okay, this person really wants to continue that learning, which I think is really important for counsellors, is we don't just stop.

We kind of keep learning and learning and learning.

So to see that on someone's resume was a big thing for me because I knew that if I was going to be working with them in the role, they might start here, but I wanted to get them there.

And I knew that they would need to keep growing to do that.

And so that's what I was always focused on, as opposed to other bits and pieces.

And look, that's great. Thanks very much.

And I think there's something in there about what PACFA offers that can actually be useful to people, and that sometimes isn't as utilized by early career counsellors as it is.

We put a lot of time and energy into our badges that can be shared on LinkedIn to alert everyone of your qualifications and to make it transparent and clear about your skills and competencies.

I think it's important that early career counsellors are really open and out there and ready to take opportunities that come up.

And you have to be brave, like Daniel was saying.

You must ask people if they've got jobs going, be prepared to take sideways steps and do different things.

And PACFA is in many ways, well, it is a community. It's a network of 12,000 people, and there's got to be lots of different opportunities in there for jobs that maybe aren't appearing on SEEK quite on the day.

So I think there's a lot of gold that can be mined through that.

And indeed, the people here today have mentioned a number of organizations that you might not necessarily be thinking of as possible employers.

Lulu?

Yeah, I want to hop off that because I've found PACFA really useful in a little bit of a different space because the charity job I have now, when I went in for my first interview, I felt good about my counselling skills, my capacity to interact with clients.

And my interviewers asked me, "What do you know about official government regulation and law in this area?"

And honestly, I laughed out loud. I was like, "I know nothing."

Yeah, I can learn.

I told them that. I can learn, I can go and find out about it, but I know nothing about the law and the background in this area.

And since that, I did get the job, but since that experience, any time I've gone for a different role or a different job, a different position, I make sure to check in that I'm aware of whatever legislation or law there is around that area of practice.

And PACFA is one of the places I check in for that because they just do a beautiful job updating in terms of that kind of information.

And just the other thing I would say on that topic is keep trying.

My private practice role that I have now, and I've had for several years, I did an initial interview just through chance.

I knew someone who knew someone. That's the part about cultivating those relationships as well.

So I did my initial interview and the person I spoke with, the owner and manager of the practice was like: "You're not quite far enough along yet. Stay in touch."

So I stayed in touch and I waited, and then I think maybe two years later, I was offered the position to join that private prac.

So cultivating the relationships, having that patience, building that long-term aspect.

And also, hot tip from me.

If you're going for a role with Lifeline, make sure you know what the legislation is around duty of care for suicide.

If you're going for a role with Butterfly Foundation, make sure you know what the duty of care and legislation is around risks associated with disordered eating.

And PACFA's often been like a backseat help on that for me, that I just double-check in that space.

I think that's really important, Lulu. Thank you. Yeah.

Employers are always interested in what you can bring for them.

They want to see that you're really interested in their area of work.

There are growing opportunities for counsellors across a whole range of government areas, but they're often not called counselling jobs.

And I think that was something that both Alyssa and Lulu, and I actually think Sophie's mentioned it as well, that doing a SEEK search for counsellors isn't going to cut it.

Counselling is such a broad and valuable skill set that it's woven into a whole lot of jobs.

And often for people looking for their first opportunity, that is going to be a really important way of looking at things.

All right. We're heading towards the end of this session, and I think we've had some fantastic advice for people about finding their first job.

Alyssa, is there anything that you would particularly like to round off by making sure that people think about in this space?

Yeah. Can I just add when you're interviewing, too, just make sure you know who you are.

You know what triggers you, you know what you thrive in, you know what your struggles are.

Because I've interviewed a whole bunch of people, and they may tick the boxes of the qualifications and the bits and pieces that they need, but they weren't open to asking for help.

They didn't know what they may find difficult.

They didn't know how they would work best, and I couldn't teach them all of those things.

If you have some self-awareness and you know a bit about who you are, and you're open about that, then I could work with that.

Everything else, I could teach someone in a role.

So just a bit of self-reflection, a bit of self-awareness, I think goes a long way, too.

Absolutely. Sophie, any final thoughts?

Yeah, look, I think any time you're looking for a job, I think exactly what Alyssa said, knowing who you are, and I think feeling prepared, and what Lulu said about knowing the laws or something key to that area.

I guess in my old work, that's why it was so much about risk assessment and if people knew about mandatory reporting.

So find a niche that you think you'll be able to support your career.

I think the networking is really important.

I don't think I understood quite how much it was.

I just went, "Oh, I'm going to talk to people and get to know them."

But it really is, because it helps down the line, and those people will give you tips and tricks along the way of what's going to support you.

The PACFA badges are really good because they show that branding that employers look for.

It's a really easy way to say, "I'm PACFA registered," instead of having-- Because they say registered with PACFA or eligible, or they might say something to that effect.

And I think the other one is get really comfortable with the code of ethics.

I haven't mentioned this part so far, but the code of ethics is like the ethics comes up throughout.

And I used to ask heaps of questions around ethical dilemmas because I wanted to know how people would think on the spot, and how much they might need to learn.

So it's not just something to go, "Oh, yeah, I know what it is."

Really read it and really get to know how it might apply for those jobs, so that if they're asking any questions around that, you've got some answers.

And look, thank you very much to everyone who's put questions in the chat about opportunities for employment.

We are going to be continuing to discuss that over the course of today, so don't worry if your question hasn't been answered.

We have also had a couple of questions about qualifications, and a question about volunteer hours, which I think I'll take into the next session.

But just Lulu, is there anything you'd like to add just before we finish up?

I guess the one thing that came up for me listening to Sophie and Alyssa just there was that a lot of the, and you about SEEK.

A lot of the jobs are going to be posted, and because of the reimbursement system in Australia, they're going to be posted and seem like they're aimed only at psychology.

The role I'm in now at my charity has typically been filled by a psychologist, but I do have the skills and capacity, and I got hired into that role.

So it's something about really having that confidence in yourself and what you've learned.

I know there are psychologists in PACFA, and that's brilliant.

But if that's not what your background is, you may still have just as much to offer and be able to fill that.

And so really being proactive and backing yourself up when you see a job that looks like it might be a good fit for you.

I would say just go for it, and even if you don't get that job, again, my two-year wait for the role.

You're just go for it, because any time you show up for that interview and have that conversation, you're building those relationships, and you just never know what's going to happen down the line and somebody's going to say, "Ah, that person would be great in this space."

So not letting the titles and some of those criteria off-put you if you feel like legitimately, "I would love to do this, and I do think I have the skills that would let me do it."

Go for it.

I think that's a wonderful note to finish up this session.

Thank you so much, Lulu, Alyssa, and Sophie.

We are so lucky to have you as members.

I think I'll be saying that all the way through today.

But PACFA is very proud of our members, and it's been really generous of you to share your expertise with us today.

Thank you very much.

Thank you.