

Position Title	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)		
Division	Australian Counselling Association (ACA)	Date	February 2026
Location	Nundah, Queensland	Reports to	ACA Chair and Board of Directors
Direct Reports	4	Type	Full time
Position Purpose			
<p>The CEO exists to provide decisive, visible leadership that ensures ACA is strategically focused, well governed and sustainably positioned to fulfil its purpose. The role is accountable for shaping and executing organisational strategy; safeguarding the vision, mission and values; and ensuring the organisation is appropriately structured, resourced and governed to deliver its objectives.</p> <p>The CEO holds overarching responsibility for financial stewardship, organisational performance and workforce leadership, while enabling strong member engagement and long-term viability. As the principal representative of ACA, the CEO leads advocacy for the counselling and psychotherapy profession, embodies the organisation's brand and ethos, and builds influential relationships with government, regulators and industry partners to advance the standing and impact of both the organisation and the profession.</p> <p>The role requires regular travel to represent ACA, attend meetings, engage stakeholders, and fulfil organisational responsibilities.</p>			
Accountabilities and Responsibilities			
Executive Leadership and Strategic Governance			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with the Board to develop, implement, monitor and adapt the ACA Strategic Plan, ensuring alignment with organisational purpose and long-term sustainability. Support the Board to discharge its fiduciary, governance and strategic oversight responsibilities through high-quality advice, analysis and reporting. Provide timely, accurate and strategic reports to the Board, committees and reference groups, and participate in meetings as required. Maintain a strong understanding of the external environment, including industry, regulatory and policy developments, and proactively advise the Board on emerging risks, opportunities and recommended actions. Source, analyse and interpret industry data, market intelligence and performance metrics to inform strategic decision-making. Ensure Board decisions are clearly translated into operational priorities and effectively implemented across the organisation. Exercise delegated authority for management decisions and undertake other duties as directed by the Board. 			
Advocacy, Public Policy and Stakeholder Engagement			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Act as the primary advocate for ACA, its members, and the counselling and psychotherapy profession at a national level. Lead government relations and lobbying efforts with federal and state stakeholders on priority policy, regulatory and sector issues. Develop and implement marketing, communications and promotion strategies that strengthen the organisation's profile, credibility and influence. Serve as an official spokesperson and public representative of ACA at government meetings, inquiries, forums and industry events. Develop organisational policy positions, submissions and position papers, including research, legislative commentary and advice to decision-makers. Build and sustain high-value strategic partnerships across government, industry, education, training, research and the broader mental health and counselling ecosystem. Identify and pursue opportunities for grants, funding, investment and revenue partnerships aligned with organisational strategy. 			
Member Engagement and Sector Leadership			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead strategies to strengthen member engagement, satisfaction and retention, ensuring members are informed, consulted and represented. 			

- Oversee effective communication channels that provide timely information to members and enable feedback on organisational performance and priorities.
- Identify opportunities to grow and diversify the member base and develop partnerships that advance the organisation's strategic objectives and sector leadership.
- Represent ACA at industry meetings, reference groups, forums and committees, including delivering presentations and thought leadership.

Operational Leadership and Organisational Performance

- Ensure the organisation has robust operational systems, policies and processes that support effective service delivery, risk management and regulatory compliance.
- Oversee the delivery and continuous improvement of high-quality member services that reflect ACA's brand, values and objectives.
- Ensure appropriate grievance, complaints and disciplinary processes are in place and effectively managed.
- Monitor organisational risk, support the Board in risk and crisis management planning, and ensure mitigation strategies are implemented.
- Lead, support and performance-manage staff, fostering a high-performing, accountable and values-aligned organisational culture.
- Drive organisational transformation as a medium-sized company limited by guarantee.
- Ensure audit processes, quality assurance frameworks, accreditation and certification systems are robust and strengthen confidence in the profession and the ACA brand.

Financial Stewardship and Resource Management

- Lead the development of annual operating plans and budgets and provide strategic financial recommendations to the Board.
- Monitor financial performance and report to the Board on results, trends and variances, initiating corrective action where required.
- Ensure the organisation's resources are managed responsibly and in compliance with legislative, regulatory and governance requirements.
- Approve expenditure and financial commitments within delegated authority and budgetary limits.

Interactions and Governance

ACA staff, sponsors, stakeholders, and government and industry contacts

Health and Safety

The role will comply with all relevant Occupational Health, Safety, and Environment legislation, codes of practice, standards, policies, operating procedures, and work instructions, and will be actively involved in ACA Health, Safety, and Environment Systems and Procedures.

Values

Progressive:

The ACA is committed to being at the forefront of new developments and innovations in the counselling profession. We seek to drive positive change in the industry by promoting best practices, advocating for the rights of counsellors and clients, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement and growth.

Consistent:

The ACA is dedicated to upholding the highest standards of professionalism and ethical practice among its members. We strive to ensure consistency and quality in counselling services by setting professional standards, providing training and support for members, and promoting a shared culture of excellence. Our goals and vision for our profession, in terms of equality of outcome, remain consistent in our message

Inclusive:

The ACA values and respects the diverse backgrounds and experiences of its members and clients. We seek to foster an inclusive and welcoming culture by promoting diversity and cultural awareness and providing resources and support for counsellors who work with marginalised or underrepresented groups.

Caring:

The ACA and its members are driven by a deep sense of compassion and empathy for those needing counselling services. We seek to provide a safe, supportive, and caring environment for counsellors and clients alike, and to promote a culture of kindness, understanding, and healing.

Person Specific – Qualifications and Experience

Qualifications:

- Tertiary degree in Counselling or Psychotherapy

Essential Experience

- Demonstrated success in senior executive leadership with accountability for organisational performance, strategic delivery and people leadership. (*Prior experience as a Chief Executive Officer, Executive Officer or equivalent senior executive is preferred.*)
- Extensive experience working with and advising a Board, including operating within robust governance and fiduciary frameworks.
- Proven strategic thought leadership in policy development, advocacy and response to emerging sector and regulatory issues.
- Strong understanding of, and commitment to representing, the counselling and psychotherapy professions and their members.
- Established capability to lead organisations through complex change, reform and ambiguity.
- Proven ability to engage, influence and build effective relationships with senior stakeholders across government, industry and the not-for-profit sector.
- Demonstrated capacity to provide authoritative advice in complex public policy, governance and political environments.
- Ability to build and sustain a strong organisational culture through inspirational leadership, clear communication and accountability.
- Demonstrated understanding of organisational risk management and oversight.

Desirable Experience

- Senior management experience within a not-for-profit (NFP), charity or member-based organisation. NFP experience is highly regarded.
- Experience leading strategy and business planning in an industry association or member-representative context.
- End-to-end experience in project and change management and digital environments.
- Experience contributing to or leading system-level reform within the mental health, counselling or broader human services sector.
- Demonstrated success in membership growth, value creation or engagement within a professional association.
- Experience designing or overseeing governance systems, committee structures or policy frameworks.
- Strong written communication and advocacy capability with evidence of influencing policy or reform outcomes.
- Experience working with the higher education sector, including curriculum design, advisory boards or accreditation frameworks.
- Experience applying human-centred design or design thinking approaches.
- An established professional network across government, education, mental health, counselling or related sectors.

Skills and Competencies:

Strategic and Systems Thinking

- Ability to think strategically and systemically, translating complex environments, data and emerging issues into clear priorities and actionable strategies.
- Strong analytical and judgement capability to assess risk, opportunity and organisational impact in dynamic and uncertain contexts.

Governance and Executive Acumen

- High level of governance literacy, including understanding of fiduciary obligations, accountability, and executive–Board boundaries.
- Ability to prepare and present high-quality reports, briefings and recommendations that support informed Board decision-making.

Leadership and Culture

- Inspirational and values-based leadership capability, with the capacity to set direction, build trust and foster accountability.
- Advanced people leadership skills, including coaching, performance management, workforce planning and succession development and the ability to actively engage with staff across all levels.
- Strong change leadership capability, enabling organisational transformation while maintaining stability and engagement.

Stakeholder Influence and Advocacy

- Highly developed influencing and negotiation skills, with the ability to operate credibly at senior government, regulatory and industry levels.
- Ability to represent the organisation authoritatively in public, political and professional forums.
- Strong relationship-building capability, maintaining constructive, long-term partnerships across diverse stakeholder groups.

Communication and Engagement

- Exceptional written and verbal communication skills, including the ability to convey complex or sensitive information with clarity, authority and diplomacy.
- Capacity to engage, inform and mobilise members, stakeholders and staff through transparent and purposeful communication.

Operational and Financial Capability

- Strong executive-level understanding of financial management, budgeting, resource allocation and organisational sustainability.
- Ability to oversee operational performance, systems and controls to ensure efficiency, compliance and quality outcomes.

Personal Effectiveness

- High level of integrity, sound judgement and professional resilience.
- Hands-on, with the ability to manage multiple priorities concurrently and make timely decisions and maintain focus under pressure.
- Commitment to ethical leadership, continuous improvement and sector stewardship.
- Highly motivated and self-driven