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Introduction

This document should be read in conjunction with the Constitution of The Financial Counsellor's Association of New South Wales Inc. (FCAN). If there is any conflict between the Constitution and this policy, this policy will prevail.

What is a Financial Counsellor?

In New South Wales a Financial Counsellor:

- Is a member of FCAN,
- Is required to undertake continuing professional development and supervision, in accordance with the requirements of FCAN,
- Holds the Diploma of Financial Counselling or is studying the Diploma in Financial Counselling,
- Works or volunteers for community organisations,
- Provides free, confidential and independent services,
- Upholds *The Australian Financial Counselling Code of Ethical Practice*

What is Financial Counselling?

Financial Counselling:

- Is a free, confidential, independent service,
- Is for individuals, families and small business operators experiencing personal financial difficulties and crisis,
- Provides short term crisis management and assists to develop long term prevention strategies,
- Is not welfare, band aiding, rescuing or simply budget preparation,
- Includes, counselling, assessing, educating, informing, providing options, negotiating, advocating, mediating, cash flow management, identifying options, personal financial management and referral,
- Supports and empowers those who are experiencing financial difficulties to overcome those difficulties.

Rights and obligations of all members

a) All members:

- agree to uphold *The Australian Financial Counselling Code of Ethical Practice*
- are bound by the conditions contained in the FCAN Constitution
- do not accept a fee for service
- renew their membership annually

b) No member, regardless of membership category, shall represent FCAN without the specific approval of the Board.

1. Accredited Financial Counsellor

1.1 Criteria

Qualification and requirements:

- Diploma of Financial Counselling*.
- Successful completion of the FCAN Accreditation process, and
- Approval of Accredited membership by FCAN Board

Ongoing Requirements:

- Currently employed (paid or unpaid) as a financial counsellor, minimum 7.5 hours per week.
- Has an FCAN approved supervisor (refer National Professional Supervision Policy).
- Meets ongoing CPD requirements,
- Payment of a subscription as set by the FCAN Board,

1.2 Rights and Obligations

- Attendance at FCAN meetings and AGM,
- Full voting rights,
- Accredited Certificate of Membership,
- Eligible for nomination to Board,
- After working for one or more years as an Accredited member and following the successful completion of an approved supervision course can apply to the FCAN Board to become an FCAN Approved Supervisor

2. Associate Financial Counsellor

2.1. Criteria

Qualification:

- Diploma of Financial Counselling*

Ongoing Requirements:

- Currently employed (paid or unpaid) as a financial counsellor, minimum of 7.5 hours per week,
- Has an FCAN approved supervisor (refer National Professional Supervision Policy),
- Meets ongoing CPD requirements
- Payment of a subscription as set by the FCAN Board

2.2. Rights and Obligations

- Attendance at FCAN meetings and AGM, without voting rights,
- Associate Certificate of Membership,
- After two years working fulltime or three years part time as an Associate member (including time spent on work placement) can apply to undergo the FCAN Accreditation process.
- Associate membership is a transition towards Accredited membership. It is expected that Associate members complete the Accreditation process no later than 4 years after becoming an Associate member.

Associate Financial Counsellor Transitional Arrangements 1 July 2021:

Associate members as at 1 July 2021 that have been an Associate member for 2 or more years will be required to undertake and complete the Accreditation process before 30 June 2023.

3. Trainee Associate Financial Counsellor

3.1. Criteria

- Currently undertaking the Diploma of Financial Counselling CHC51115, and
- Employed or volunteering as a Trainee Financial Counsellor or Financial Capability Worker with a community organisation, and
- Undertaking work placement supervision or mentoring, and
- Undertaking CPD to assist with their development, and
- Payment of a subscription as set by the FCAN Board.

3.2. Rights and Obligations

- Attendance at FCAN, meetings and AGM, without voting rights,
- Trainee Associate Certificate of Membership,
- Is eligible to advance to Associate member when Diploma of Financial Counselling is completed, a copy of the certificate and transcript is provided to FCAN along with evidence of employment as a financial counsellor.

4. Rural Financial Counsellor

4.1 Criteria

- Currently working (paid or unpaid for a Rural Financial Counselling service as a Rural Financial Counsellor, minimum 7.5 hours per week
- Undertaking Supervision as agreed with Rural Financial Counselling service
- Meets CPD requirements for Rural Financial Counsellors
- Payment of a subscription as set by the FCAN Board.

4.2 Rights and Obligations

- Attendance at FCAN meetings and AGM, without voting rights.
- Rural Financial Counsellor Certificate of Membership,
- Eligible for nomination to FCAN Working Groups,

5. Credit Advocate

5.1 Criteria

- Persons who are lawyers and members of the Supreme Court of NSW,
- have been working in the field of credit and debt for the twelve (12) months immediately preceding their application for membership,
- have no conflict of interest in that field,
- are not employees of, or advisers to a credit provider,
- do not charge either directly or indirectly a fee for service for credit and/or debt advice,
- whose application for membership in this class has been approved by the Board.

- Payment of a subscription as set by the FCAN Board.

5.2 Rights and Obligations

- Attendance at FCAN meetings and AGM, without voting rights
- Credit Advocate Certificate of Membership,
- Eligible for nomination to executive committee,
- Eligible to chair sub-committees,
- Comply with the membership and professional development requirements of their legal professional body (e.g. the Law Society of NSW),
- Continue to practice in the field of credit and debt,
- Act without a conflict of interest,

6. Affiliate Member

6.1 Eligibility

Affiliate members are individuals not working as financial counsellors such as:

- Individuals working in a related role
- Associate and Accredited members between positions, who want to remain eligible to attend meetings, update training and receive minutes,
- Former accredited members of FCAN who have retired from practicing financial counselling and want to remain a member of FCAN,
- Members/employees of not for profit organisations or Registered Training Organisations as approved by FCAN Board,
- Members of other state and territory associations or networks who want to be affiliated with FCAN,
- Members unable to fulfil requirements for other categories e.g. due to illness or unemployment
- People undertaking the Diploma of Financial Counselling CHC51115 who are not employed (paid or unpaid) as a trainee financial counsellor
- Financial Capability Workers who are not undertaking the Diploma in Financial Counselling CHC51115

6.2 Rights and Obligations

- Affiliate members name cannot appear on a Client Authority Form.
- Attendance at FCAN meetings and AGM, without voting rights,
- Affiliate membership certificate
- Payment of a subscription as set by the FCAN Board.

7. Life Member

7.1 Criteria: By nomination received by the Board.

7.2 Rationale: Recognises services of an exceptional¹ nature

¹ For definition of exceptional refer FCAN By-law APPENDIX 3.1.2 (2005 version)
Financial Counsellors' Association of NSW Inc. September 2021

7.3 Rights and Obligations

- Attendance at FCAN meetings and conferences,
- Provision of minutes of meetings,
- No payment of subscription is required,
- A life member may practice as a Financial Counsellor only whilst she/he maintains accreditation, thus the maintaining of accreditation entitles them to the rights of accredited members.

8. Membership Application Process

Application for a new membership, to renew or to rejoin shall be made on the applicable Membership Application/Rejoin or Renewal form.

The Membership Secretary may request appropriate documentation at any time in support of a membership application. Membership may be withheld or suspended pending receipt of requested documentation and payment of subscription.

9. Annual membership renewal

Memberships are renewable on the 1st July each year and become effective on the acceptance of the lodgement of the completed renewal form and payment of the annual subscription, as set from time to time by the FCAN Board. Memberships not renewed or which are unfinancial on the 1st October shall be lapsed.

10. Transfer from interstate

FCAN has reciprocal arrangements for members transferring to NSW from interstate. To be admitted as a member of FCAN members transferring from interstate are required to submit the Membership Application/Rejoin form, meet the FCAN membership category criteria.

11. Leave of absence and extended leave of absence

Associate and Accredited members can apply to take leave of absence for up to 12 months or extended leave of absence over 12 months, and:

- Members on approved leave of absence should remain financial members of FCAN, at the volunteer price of membership.
- Members on leave of absence are not required to undertake supervision during periods of leave of absence.
- Members on leave of absence are encouraged to keep their CPD up-to-date during periods of leave of absence. It is understood, however, that this is not always feasible. If this is the case, catch up CPD may be required upon return from leave of absence.

11.1 Leave of Absence <12 months

Members are required to notify FCAN when they are taking leave of absence and receive approval that the Leave of Absence has been approved by the Board. The length of leave of absence allowed is 12 months.

When returning from leave, some catch-up Supervision and/or CPD may be required to retain membership. This will be set by the Board.

11.2 Extended Leave of Absence >12 months.

If an Associate or Accredited member seeks to take leave of absence for a period over 12 months they are required to notify FCAN and receive approval that the extended Leave of Absence has been approved by the Board.

On return from Leave of Absence over 12 months members will be required to complete the FCAN requirements for the category they were a member of before the extended Leave of Absence.

Members returning from extended leave of absence will be required to undertake catch-up Supervision, CPD or retraining as set by the Board.

12. Lapsed membership

The FCAN Constitution requires that members renew their membership on July 1 each year.

Members who are unfinancial and have not lodged their annual membership renewal form or applied for leave of absence by 30 September will be lapsed on 1 October.

Associate and Accredited members whose membership is lapsed are required to apply to the Board to rejoin and have their reinstatement approved where the period of lapsing is within 9 months after the lapse date. Where the lapse period is over 9 months the lapsed Associate or Accredited member will need to complete the FCAN requirements for the category they were a member of before the lapsing.

Documentation

- FCAN Membership Application/Rejoin Form or Membership Renewal Form.
- National Professional Supervision Policy and FCAN Supervision Policy and Guidelines.

Revision Record

Issue 1	November 2000
Accepted at general meeting at conference	April 17, 2007
Issue 2	May 2007
Issue 3	April 2015
Issue 4	Board approved January 2019
Issue 5	Board approved June 2021
Issue 6	Board approved September 2021

* CHC52108 - Diploma of Community Services (Financial counselling), CHC51002- Diploma of Community Services (Financial Counselling), CHC51115- Diploma of Financial Counselling