

More than a Decade of Considerable Change

An Interpretation of the New Zealand Association of Counsellors Newsletters 1997–2009

Judi H. Miller

Abstract

From tentative beginnings in 1974 to the current professionally produced publication, *Counselling Today*, the New Zealand Association of Counsellors Newsletter, has served as a public and accessible record of the Association's growth and development. In this paper, I extend an earlier interpretation of themes found in newsletters from 1974 through 1996 by analysing the content of newsletters from 1997 through 2009. Findings suggest that the key focus of the Association is professionalisation, and that this has created a perceived split between the aims of the executive and the rest of the membership. I encourage members to consider the historical development of their Association when they participate in debates about its future direction.

Keywords: New Zealand Association of Counsellors, professionalisation, Treaty partnership, registration, school counselling

The newsletters of the New Zealand Association of Counsellors (NZAC) have been described as “an important source of information and arena for professional debate” (*NZAC Newsletter*, 16(5), p. 54, 1996). Furthermore, the current editor, Cilla Heymer, affirmed the Māori subtitle *Nga Korero Awhina* (*The Speaking Helps*) by stating that “the newsletter is about helping members of the NZAC to connect by putting words on paper” (*Counselling Today*, 27(1), p. 2, 2006).¹ Newsletters therefore offer an interesting resource for tracking the Association's development. In a previous paper (Miller, 1996), I conducted a thematic analysis of the newsletters' contents to interpret the first two decades of Association development. In that article, I suggested that the main

purpose of the Association had shifted from protecting and promoting the work of school and vocational guidance counsellors to protecting and promoting the work of private practitioners and enabling their access to third-party funding. Access to third-party funding coincided with other initiatives and led to a dramatic increase in membership, and a resultant change in policies for recruitment, admission, and retention of members. I noted that such policies were ratified at poorly attended AGMs and encouraged members to participate more by voicing their opinions on the future structure and focus of their Association through meetings and newsletters.

The turn of the century has heralded more changes for counselling, and the NZAC is now on the brink of making another major organisational change by seeking statutory registration of counselling as a profession. This decision has the potential again to modify considerably the purpose and focus of the Association. In seeking to explore whether the membership participated in debates about, and responded to, proposed changes, I examined the content of the last decade of newsletters. I found that the newsletter continues to be a site for information dissemination but it is also now a site for feedback, debate, and the expression of members' opinions, including those members who are on the executive, about these proposed changes.

My purpose in this paper is to compare themes emerging from early Association newsletters with those in newsletters of 1997 through 2009, and to interpret the assumed change of purpose and focus of the Association as it moves toward counsellor registration.

Studying the Newsletters

In 2004, the editor of what was then known as the *New Zealand Association of Counselling Newsletter*, Cilla Heymer, stated that its purpose was to “inform, instruct and inspire” (*NZAC Newsletter*, 24(4), p. 2, 2004), and later that year she noted that “the primary function of this Newsletter is to provide the means of communication between the National Executive, the National Office and the membership” (*NZAC Newsletter*, 25(2), p. 2, 2004). Furthermore, in the following year, the editor listed her objectives, including to “accurately and thoroughly represent the policies, decisions and activities of NZAC nationally” (*NZAC Newsletter*, 26(2), p. 2, 2005). For this reason, I suggest that an interpretation of the newsletters' contents over a decade provides an important perspective on shifts in policy and on shifts that concern the membership.

For the current study, I read 54 newsletters and 11 supporting annual reports (comprising those from December 1996 to December 2009, inclusive) and focused on

the emergence and development of their key themes. For purposes of comparison with earlier newsletter interpretation, and the exploration of trends over time, I used as my initial guide the same category names I had used previously (see Miller, 1996). These were: Professionalisation, School Issues, Social Issues, Training, Supervision, Biculturalism, Third Party, Private Practice, Careers, and Gay and Lesbian issues. I soon found, however, that the Professionalisation category was too broad to describe the tenor of many contributions. For this reason, I added the following new categories: Membership, which included items about descriptions of membership types, policies relating to changes in membership criteria, debates about the criteria for different levels of membership and for life membership, and lists of new members; Professional Development, which included counselling reports from members about conferences attended, and advertisements for upcoming workshops, conferences, and training courses; Ethics, which included policies, legal advice, and outcomes of complaints procedures; and Registration, which included debates, letters, reports of working groups, and proposed remits for AGMs.

Interestingly, while there was an increase in the number of contributions that fell into these subcategories of Professionalisation, there was a marked decrease in two original categories. I removed the Gay and Lesbian category because the number of items specific to them was negligible. I also removed the Private Practice category because articles promoting their membership were often subsumed within contributions about registration and, possibly, within advertisements. I also decided that Treaty Partnership rather than biculturalism more accurately described newsletter items of this decade.

The Challenges Inherent in Categorisation

In order to identify and analyse key Association themes of the decade, I read each newsletter item carefully, considered the category (or categories) into which it appeared to fit, and recorded each in table form. This process led to the introduction of new categories and the deletion of others. I then compared the number of contributions in each category with those of the previous decade. In my earlier analysis, I started tabling newsletter items from 1989, when an Association name change was suggested and membership growth and diversity were predicted (Palmer, 1994). For the present paper, I grouped the number of items from 1989 through 1996, and used similar sized groupings of items from 1997 through 2002, and 2003 through 2009, in order to allow for some comparison over similar time periods.

While the resulting table provides a gross overview of some trends across time, it is not a definitive account. Taken at face value, it suggests that the weighting of each item is the same, whether it is a half-page report on the outcome of an ethics hearing or a three-page article describing the advantages of registration to members. Furthermore, it may suggest that the total number of items equals the total number of items in all newsletters. This is not the case. Many items span several categories and were therefore counted more than once. Take, for example, a letter concerning an article in the media about a school counsellor who did not inform parents about their child's disclosure of rape. This item was counted within the four categories of Professionalisation, School Issues, Ethics, and Social Issues. Similarly, the draft document regarding clinical supervision of Association members was counted within the two categories Supervision and Professionalisation.

Furthermore, since 2005, each newsletter has contained a regular column associated with the executive portfolios of Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC), School Counsellors, Membership, Ethics, and Careers, and this has ensured the publication of at least one item in each of these categories. In December 2006, a new regular feature entitled Aunt Ethica was introduced, providing a comprehensive platform by means of three "letters" to her in each issue for sharing basic, sometimes light-hearted, information and advice about ethical problems. Thus, this feature has ensured that each subsequent newsletter contained three items in the Ethics category.

In the Professional Development category, initially I counted all articles that informed members of new practices and ideas. These included reports by members on conferences and workshops attended, book reviews, and advertisements for upcoming workshops and conferences. By 2000, however, the number of advertisements had increased dramatically. Advertisements were now a source of revenue to help support the publication of the newsletter and their focus was often to promote the livelihood of private practitioners. I chose, therefore, to include in this category only advertisements for counsellor training, workshops, and conferences. This still renders the number of items in this category disproportionately large, but I suggest it demonstrates that one of the purposes of the newsletter—to inform members of professional development opportunities—is occurring. Furthermore, given that one current membership debate in the newsletters concerns the value of professional development for maintaining membership standards, I suggest that the increase in the number of items in this category is noteworthy.

Table: Total number and percentage of Newsletter items in selected categories across two decades.

Focus category	Items 1989- 1996*	% of total	Items 1997- 2002	% of total	Items 2003- 2009	% of total
Professionalisation	98	24	67	10	87	11
Membership			44	6	60	8
Ethics			57	8	80	11
Professional Development			213	30	197	26
Registration			22	3	74	10
School Issues	84	20	60	9	45	6
Social Issues	61	15	50	7	30	4
Training	53	13	29	4	22	3
Third-Party	45	11	55	8	39	5
Supervision	29	7	34	5	41	5
Biculturalism/Treaty Partnership	22	5	45	6	59	8
Careers	19	5	24	4	25	3
	411	100	700	100	759	100

* totals from Miller (1996)

The General Focus of Newsletters

The figures in Table 1 provide one view of the newsletters' contents. They suggest that from 1997 through 2002, the majority of contributions to the newsletter focused on professional development, professionalisation, concerns relating to the role and function of school and career counsellors, and to a lesser extent, items pertaining to third-party funding and ethics. Major changes between this time period and the previous seven years included a noticeable decrease in contributions focusing on social issues, including comments on violence, the Privacy Act, discrimination, and mental health. Furthermore, contributions concerned with sexual abuse now focused on third-party funding.

From 2003 through 2009, while the majority of contributions to the newsletter focused on professional development and professionalisation, there was a marked increase in contributions concerned with registration and ethics (though this, I suggest, was influenced by the Aunt Ethica section) and, to a lesser extent, membership and Treaty partnership. Noteworthy was the decrease in the contribution of items concerning school counsellors.

Alongside this partial view of Association development, I have examined the nature of items that represent major changes in the number of contributions and explored their key themes.

Key Themes of the Decade

Maintenance of School and Careers Counsellor Recognition

In 1996, I noted that despite the Association being founded to support school and vocational guidance counsellors, beginning in the 1990s there was a decrease in the prominence of items related to them. This trend has continued during the past decade, with a drop to 13% of items in the period from 1997 through 2002 and to 9% from 2003 through 2009. While these numbers may suggest a shift in focus, several articles have demonstrated continued support for promoting and maintaining a strong position for school guidance counsellors. Examples include the 1996 Association strategic plan, and a submission to the Minister of Education to support school counsellors in their bid to retain government funding for their tertiary training. In response, the Ministry allocated more financially supported training places in universities for school counsellors in that and the following year. Also in 1997, the Association supported the establishment of a fledgling network of school counsellors, and a survey of the roles and functions of school counsellors by a university counsellor-educator. In 2002, NZAC supported the production of *The School Guidance Counsellors' Appointment Kit*, which was sent to every school advertising a vacancy for a school counsellor.

In reading these newsletters, however, there is a definite sense that school guidance counsellors were feeling sidelined both in their places of work and in “their” Association. With respect to their work, in 1998 school counsellors expressed concern that the Ministry of Education was piloting a programme to employ social workers in schools, a policy that could severely limit the resources available to guidance counsellors. Furthermore, in 2007, school counsellors’ salaries were threatened when the Teachers’ Council deemed that guidance counsellors were not a specialist teaching group with the same career paths as other teaching professionals. Both of these concerns were described in the newsletters to encourage members to lobby the Minister of Education.

Evidence that school guidance counsellors were feeling sidelined by “their” Association was demonstrated in the development of the school counsellor interest group meetings at the 1998 conference and, in 2003, the establishment of a separate school counsellors’ national conference. Furthermore, at the school counsellors’ national conference in 2008, “strong interest was expressed in the possibility of forming

a [separate] Association to support and advocate specifically for guidance counsellors” (*Counselling Today*, 29(3), p. 10, 2009). This produced a flurry of articles in the newsletter promoting the work of school counsellors, expressing their concerns about the implications for them of the registration of counselling, and debating the costs and benefits of remaining in the Association. The Association responded by signalling a proposal to form a Guidance Counsellors’ Advisory Committee to assist and support the School Counsellor Portfolio. The President, Anita Bocchino, wrote, “We now have two school counsellors on the National Executive and it is our hope school counsellors will now be well represented” (*Counselling Today*, 30(2), p. 3, 2009).

Influence of Third-Party Funders

In 1996, I noted an increase in the number of newsletter articles pertaining to the third-party funder ACC. I also argued that ACC requirements were having considerable influence on the policies of the Association. Changes were instituted in the Code of Ethics, the criteria used for membership, subscription fees, and the requirements for maintaining membership. While figures in Table 1 indicate a drop in the number of items categorised as Third Party, the content of items indicates that the Association is now concerned about the influence of ACC on counselling policy and practice. Since 1999, each newsletter has included a regular article describing current outcomes of meetings with and policy changes by ACC, a common theme being that the Association focused on competent and ethical practice and third-party funders focused on accountability. In 2002, for example, a letter was sent to ACC stating, “NZAC finds ACC’s new procedures to be insensitive, intrusive, disrespectful, punitive and time consuming” and “The need for accountability has overtaken the statutory requirement for provision of therapy” (*NZAC Newsletter*, 23(3), p. 28, 2002). Nevertheless, ACC policies prevailed, and I suggest that this is one reason why recent newsletters have contained many examples of members voicing concern that registration will similarly impose new, abhorrent requirements upon members.

Had I completed this analysis using newsletters from just a decade, the comments above would have been adequate but incomplete. Interestingly, by including a further two years of newsletters, I can now provide more evidence of the influence of ACC on NZAC membership. In August 2009, ACC introduced a plan to radically change how its Sensitive Claims Unit managed new claims. The proposed “clinical pathways” plan “came as a complete shock to all counsellors, psychotherapists, social workers and some psychologists working with survivors of sexual abuse” (*Counselling Today*, 30(2), p. 15,

2009). As a result of the widespread anger and discontent directed at ACC, the policy implementation was delayed for a month for consultation, although this simply entailed Association members being informed of the pathways. The implementation of this policy rallied Association members and a list of objections to the pathways plan appeared in the December 2009 newsletter, but these had not yet arrested the implementation of the pathways policy by ACC.²

Progress on Treaty Partnership

While the data in Table 1 indicate a slight increase over the decade in the number of items categorised as biculturalism, the content of the items themselves tells a different story. This decade of newsletters provides evidence of the increased prominence of the Treaty of Waitangi within the Association, and actions of members and their executive to best address their partnership responsibilities thereto. The AGM of 1998 signalled new energy in this area, with a motion being passed “That National Executive initiate development of parallel recognition of Māori knowledge and expertise in the forthcoming year” (*NZAC Newsletter*, 19(1), p. 49, 1998). As a result, Te Whāriki Tautoko (a network that sat alongside but outside of NZAC) was established. The purpose of this network was primarily to:

implement education and training appropriate to Kaupapa Māori counselling. To implement counselling standards and policies that will engender an appropriate and safe environment for Kaiāwhina and their clients. To acknowledge and implement the true intent of the Treaty in Aotearoa and to engage in relationships which enhance principles of the Treaty. (*NZAC Newsletter*, 21(1), p. 14, 2000)

Further developments mentioned in the newsletter include the President, Ada Crowe, establishing regular meetings, funded by the NZAC, with Te Whāriki Tautoko; the theme of the 2001 National Conference Spaces 2001–Te Pūtahitanga o nga Ara; and the principle of partnership being included in the 2002 Code of Ethics. Comments about the 2001 conference in the newsletter highlighted an atmosphere enriched by the largest-ever presence of Māori (*NZAC Newsletter*, 22(1), pp. 8–12, 2001). In 2002, a newsletter article described the kete that travel to conferences and another described the three-part conference workshop on the Māori perspective within counselling.

In 2004, the first national Māori hui was held, from which came a number of remits addressing the need for cultural supervision of members, changes in some words in the NZAC constitution, a recommendation that each membership interview panel have at

least one Māori member, and that a Māori member have a seat at executive level alongside its Treaty partner. The culmination of this hui was the establishment of an independent rūpū within NZAC and the adoption of most reverts. At the 2007 AGM, a Māori member with significant mana, Vi Woolf, was given full NZAC Executive membership status with the title Te Ahi Kaa, the lightbearer.

From 2008, the President, Anita Bocchino, and Te Ahi Kaa attended international conferences, registration meetings, and other planning and review meetings, and from 2009, a Partnership Portfolio report appeared in the newsletters alongside the President's report. In April 2009, the executive began a self "Treaty audit" by taking time in their meeting to focus on "becoming bi-cultural in thought, word and deed" (*Counselling Today*, 29(4), p. 4, 2009). Also in that year, the first NZAC Māori membership process for two new members was reported in detail in the newsletter.

While each of these items was recorded in a positive manner, other newsletter items displayed discontent among some members that new membership criteria would be impractical and unworkable. Counsellor-educators in particular were concerned about the inclusion of substantial bicultural supervision as a criterion for membership.

The Changing Role of the Executive

Changes in the Regulation of Membership Requirements

In 1996, I outlined the dramatic increase in Association membership growth from 60 in 1974, to around 350 in the 1980s, 800 in 1993, and 2000 in 1996. I also noted that this growth created a challenge for the Association's executive. In September 1996, the wisdom of continuing the founding policy of a large and broad membership was brought into question and applications for membership were frozen (*NZAC Newsletter*, 17(1), p. 6, 1996). As a result of this decision, the Association faced a huge backlog of membership applications, and in 1997 subscriptions were increased, new membership criteria were drafted, and minimum training standards were set. Each of these developments was contentious and, I suggest, positioned the executive in a new role, one at odds with the rest of the membership. For example, while subscription fees were being raised, members used AGM discussions, newsletter articles, and letters to the editor to complain that "bureaucracy was threatening the soul of the Association" (*NZAC Newsletter*, 21(1), p. 5, 2000), the Association was becoming "exclusionary" (*NZAC Newsletter*, 21(3), p. 5, 2001), the fees were too high (*NZAC Newsletter*, 22(1), p. 5, 2001), and the Association was "growing and becoming expert driven" (*NZAC Newsletter*, 22(2), pp. 11–12, 2001).

Consistent with the view that professionalisation requires the participation of a professional body (Burrage & Torstendahl, 1990), arguments for and against the new membership criteria by practitioners and university personnel appeared in newsletters around this time. The executive seemed to be leading the Association in a direction without full member support. Whereas an executive member commented, “There is clearly general agreement among members on the need to improve entry standards and also to monitor the retention of membership by setting standards for supervision and ongoing professional development” (*NZAC Newsletter*, 18(1), p. 26, 1997), a university counsellor-educator requested that the executive stop trying to “police counsellors; instead, expect them to follow the guidelines for professional practice set by the organisation” (*NZAC Newsletter*, 18(1), p. 44, 1997). Another wrote: “It seems that NZAC has been designing a membership process that is more bureaucratic, more expensive and more complicated than most. The evaluative gaze of a professional association should be on programmes of training rather than on individuals” (*NZAC Newsletter*, 18(2), p. 17, 1997).

This questioning of the role of the executive continued into the new century. Sites of struggle included membership requirements for supervision and professional development and the attempt to regulate training programmes. In 2003, a university counsellor-educator remarked that “the supervision and professional development forms exemplify an important site of struggle around the role of the Association and its philosophy, underpinning the practice of counselling in New Zealand” (*NZAC Newsletter*, 2(2), p. 46, 2003). Furthermore, while ten out of approximately 23 training programmes had sought and gained Association approval status, in September 2006 the process of course approvals was discontinued amid comment that “simply completing an Approved programme does not necessarily mean that a person has developed the level of integration between theory and practice required for membership to NZAC” (*Counselling Today*, 27(2), p. 7, 2006). Concern was also expressed that the process was not sufficiently robust and “the competitiveness of the training market has made the process highly subject to accusations of conflict of interest” (*Counselling Today*, 27(2)).

At the 2007 AGM, members approved proposed changes to increase the length of provisional membership and the hours of practice and supervision, to change the focus of membership interviews from an interrogation of the training of potential members to a conversation about their knowledge and understanding of the philosophy and constitution of the NZAC, and to set more clearly defined bicultural criteria (*Counselling Today*, 29(1), 2008). One issue that remained unclear, as well as

contentious, however, was the recommendation that members engage in bicultural supervision, defined as one-on-one supervision that “needs to be conducted with someone who is of Māori descent, has ancestral/whakapapa knowledge and who has a clear understanding of how to work with Māori in culturally safe ways” (*Counselling Today*, 30(1), p. 12, 2009). At the AGM held in September 2009 this issue sparked lengthy debate, and in the following newsletter the Membership Committee reiterated its commitment to Treaty partnership but recognised “the many difficulties Provisional Members may have to access 12 individual sessions with a cultural advisor/consultant/supervisor, so this requirement has been removed” (*Counselling Today*, 30(2), p. 13, 2009).

Throughout the decade, the overall number of members recorded in annual reports has remained fairly constant at around 2300 to 2400. Interestingly, there has been an increase to over 2600 since 2005. I suggest that this increase may be due to the establishment by the New Zealand government of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 and the proposal led by the NZAC Executive that counsellors seek registration under this jurisdiction.

Positioning for Registration

Despite comments from NZAC President Sue Webb in 1999 that, internationally, professional associations had found the registration process expensive, and restrictive in terms of professional autonomy (*NZAC Newsletter*, 19(4), p. 14, 1999), in 2000 the Association’s executive set up a registration working party to write a submission on the proposed Health Professionals Competence Bill (*NZAC Newsletter*, 20(2), p. 3, 2000). The working party met with personnel from the Ministry of Health to discuss the implications of registering and an article considering the merits or not of registration was published to encourage member comment (*NZAC Newsletter*, 21(2), p. 29, 2001). Member feedback “ranged from political suicide not to seek registration to caution re: the cost to members of registration” (*NZAC Newsletter*, 22(1), p. 44, 2001). While the working party considered it had a mandate to continue to explore the registration issue on behalf of the Association, in 2002, when the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act was being introduced, it was recorded that “there does not appear to be enough substantial evidence of benefits at this time to support NZAC proceeding along a statutory registration pathway” (*NZAC Newsletter*, 23(2), p. 27, 2002).

Interestingly, despite this decision, the number of newsletter articles presenting diverse views about registration increased. This is, I suggest, a good demonstration that

the purpose of the newsletter to encourage debate among members was occurring. Examples include several letters to the editor in 2002, and a draft *Scopes of Practice for the Counselling Profession* in 2003. The authors of the Counsellor Registration report in December 2003, National Executive member Gorham Milbank and Vice-President Antony McFelin, believed that defining the scopes of practice would enable NZAC representatives to discuss lines of difference with other professions (*NZAC Newsletter*, 24(3), 2003). Also included in this 2003 newsletter was a 40-item registration questionnaire for member completion and an article expressing concern by school counsellors that registration would make their membership of the NZAC imperative.

Responses to this questionnaire showed that members were confused. Some supported registration on pragmatic grounds: the government will impose it anyway, and the livelihood of some members will depend on it. Others resisted registration mostly on philosophical grounds: no evidence that it will protect clients from harm; no flexibility, with imposition of frameworks and qualification standards that limit counselling relationships; possible alienation of groups within NZAC, especially Māori, and a lack of autonomy. These opposing views have continued. An opinion poll distributed in September 2005 rendered 485 responses (20% of the membership) in which 25% of respondents said that registration was essential for professionalism, 11% were against statutory regulation, and 12% did not want registration but wanted NZAC to continue exploring the process. The executive noted that there was not a clear mandate but, after several discussions, they passed the following motion: “The NZAC Executive meeting determines that counselling should become regulated as a registered profession” (*NZAC Newsletter*, 26(2), p. 10, 2005).

In 2006, a regular column on registration was established in the newsletters and divergent opinions among both the members and the executive appeared, notably in letters to the editor but also in more lengthy articles. Efforts were made by the working group to allay fears that long-serving counsellors who did not have recent qualifications and counsellors who worked in kaupapa Māori ways would be excluded by registration (*NZAC Newsletter*, 26(4), 2006). Yet there is evidence that registration debates were setting members of the executive apart from other members. Several articles appeared cautioning the Association against moving too fast (*Counselling Today*, 27(4), 2007) and at the 2007 AGM university counsellor-educators put forward a remit to cancel the registration process. The note about this in the next registration column stated, “It has become apparent, as reflected in this remit (to stop the application process and continue discussion) that, in spite of our best efforts some members do not feel they have had

enough time to review the issues” (*Counselling Today*, 28(1), p. 4, 2007). As a result, the executive slowed down the process and initiated a postal vote in December 2008, where 52% of eligible members voted, with 70% in favour of registration and 29% opposed. The executive then voted to complete and lodge an application for registration under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003.

Since then, members have continued to use the newsletter to voice their concerns about the effects of registration on the Association. One member wrote an article outlining the uncertainty for members (*Counselling Today*, 29(1), p. 21, 2008), another canvassed and wrote about member concerns (*Counselling Today*, 30(2), p. 9, 2009), and another considered possible outcomes for the Association post-registration. While many of the articles exemplify divisions between the executive and some other members, there is also evidence of divisions within the executive as they consider the development of Māori Scopes of Practice and School Guidance Counsellors’ Scopes of Practice (*Counselling Today*, 29(4), p. 13, 2009).

In March 2007, editor Cilla Heymer introduced a new focus—one in which she would interview new and retiring members of the executive, people presenting keynotes at conferences, and members who were participating in interesting activities. An increase in the number of these pithy biographies, engendering a collegial flavour, followed member feedback that they enjoyed reading interviews (*Counselling Today*, 29(1), 2008). Their presence, I suggest, both provided light relief from some of the weighty articles about registration and membership, and may have helped counter-balance the notable divisions between the executive and other members.

Discussion and Conclusion

In analysing over a decade of newsletters (1997 through 2009), I have highlighted that this publication and various public meetings, such as AGMs, are important sites for the NZAC executive to provide information to members, and for members to air their views about the development of their Association. I have also provided evidence from the newsletters that during the past decade the Association has confronted and responded to an increase in internal and external pressures and demands that had begun to emerge but were not resolved in previous decades. While the breadth of analysis may have been restricted by my aim to compare newsletter themes across two decades, I have been able to demonstrate that contributions relating to concerns about registration have displaced some, and extended other, earlier concerns of members. Specifically, there is a continued expression of concern that the original inclusive focus

of the Association has been replaced with an exclusive focus on its professionalisation. Furthermore, the expressions of concern by members that their sense of collegiality was threatened by the policy changes introduced to curtail the rapid increase in membership applications in the 1990s have continued with the introduction of potential policy changes in preparation for registration. Disturbingly, there have been no comparable expressions of concern that the focus on social issues has disappeared.

Newsletter reports indicate that the outcomes of these changes and the ways in which members have responded to them have created the perception that the executive sits apart from the general membership as it struggles to establish practical, affordable, and culturally appropriate organisational structures, policies, and operational guidelines within the Association. In addition, members who hold philosophical beliefs concordant with the Association's original inclusiveness are pitted against members who hold the view that the survival of counselling depends on exclusiveness. Because many of the changes have been initiated in response to external demands of third-party funders and the proposed registration board, the Association's capacity to define its position autonomously has been undermined, and it is likely that some members will continue to be unhappy about aspects of its policy-making. Thus, in this new decade, I suggest that the Association appears to be poised on the brink of a major change that has the potential to alter, not only the livelihood of many of its members, but also the future of the organisation.

In conclusion, it seems clear that current challenges for the Association, as depicted in the main resource for member participation, the newsletters, were summed up in 2009 by the President, Anita Bocchino, who noted, "It has been a trying time for members with many difficult concerns surfacing at the same time demanding extra time and attention from members and the National Executive. There are worrying trends and changes around ACC, School Guidance Counsellors finding their feet, and a new relationship to NZAC, and finally issues around registration and imminent changes to our organisation" (*Counselling Today*, 30(2), p. 3, 2009). To these issues, I would add that registration challenges initiatives to enrich Treaty partnership relationships in the Association. The newsletter content demonstrates the complexity of each of these issues. While the outcomes are unknown, change in the Association is inevitable, and I hope that highlighting these issues will encourage members to take an historical perspective when they participate in future debates about the direction of their Association.

Notes

1. The September 2006 issue, 27(1), was the first to be titled *Counselling Today: Nga Korero Awhina*.
2. A postscript relating to ACC can now be added. A Ministerial Review of the Clinical Pathways was commissioned in October 2009. The Review panel received written submissions from a number of people, including sexual abuse survivors, and met with various bodies representing treatment providers, representatives of survivors, police and doctors. In December 2010, Elayne Johnston and Ann Nation reported that the ACC had made significant changes in response to the Review panel's recommendations. These included, but were not limited to, the implementation of 16 sessions of counselling support for new claimants, as well as for those whose claims were declined between 27 October 2009 and 16 August 2010 under the Clinical Pathways plan. The acceptance of assessment methods other than the DSM-IV, a recommendation of the Sensitive Claims Advisory Group, is a matter for ongoing discussion (*Counselling Today*, 31(2), p. 19, 2010). These changes, I suggest, represent a new era in which the political voice of the Association is being heard by the ACC.

References

- Burrage, M. C., & Torstendahl, R. (Eds.). (1990). *Professions in theory and history: Rethinking the study of the professions*. London: Sage.
- Miller, J. H. (1996). From unity to diversity: An account of the growth, development and change in the New Zealand Association of Counsellors as identified through Association newsletters. *New Zealand Journal of Counselling*, 18(1), 36–49.
- Palmer, S. (1994). Journals and journeys: An interview with Tony Watt. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 22(2), 285–296.