



Affordable counselling
& mental health
supports

COUNSELLOR INFORMATION PACKET

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WWW.ROUGHPATCHCOUNSELLING.COM

ABOUT ROUGH PATCH

Rough Patch is an affordable counselling and mental health care service that provides counselling, referrals, and other supports. The first of our kind in Australia, we're a non-profit social enterprise using an innovative model of practice, and our mission is to make it easier and more affordable for everyone to access mental health supports and resources.

The mandate of Rough Patch is to reduce barriers and increase access to mental health supports and resources in Eora/Sydney; reduce the stigma associated with mental health; and provide counsellors with a supportive work environment that prioritises both client and counsellor wellbeing needs.

HOW WE'RE DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY

We facilitate the delivery of medium-cost counselling (also known as low-bono), on a sliding scale from \$70-\$100 (or \$80-\$110 for couples) per session. We allow clients the dignity of choosing their fee-for-service, and we don't require them to prove their income.

We rent office space and provide wrap-around business supports to trained, professional counsellors in private practice who want to be a part of our innovative community of practice. This includes resources, consultation and ongoing supervision and development opportunities. Through this, counsellors thrive and clients access supports in a timely and affordable manner.

We operate out of a shopfront retail location. There's nothing clinical about our setting and this supports the destigmatisation of mental health challenges. People walk in to chat with us about mental health, access counselling and shop for resources in our store.

We are a non-profit social enterprise. The majority of our operational revenue is generated through counsellor rent and shop sales. This means that our dependency on public funding and private donations is limited, which ultimately strengthens our sustainability.



HOW IT WORKS

Our qualified counsellors offer counselling at reduced rates (see below) to provide clients with the counselling and support they need. In turn, Rough Patch provides room hire and additional private practice support services at a significantly lower rate than other practices. This means counsellors can charge their clients less, making counselling more affordable.

In order to keep our waitlists as short as possible, clients are able to access up to 20 sessions per year. If more sessions are needed, the counsellor will work with the client to find longer-term supports as part of the counselling process. Counsellors work in a time-limited way, helping clients feel equipped to undertake other counselling supports if necessary.

We also have a shop that sells books, resources, self-care items and homewares with a mental health focus. The profit from shop sales goes back into providing more affordable counselling and mental health programs.

This graphic is a guide to help you determine a fee for counselling at Rough Patch. We know that each person's situation is unique, so this is a guide only. Daily living costs refers to costs such as housing, food, healthcare, school or higher education, childcare, clothing and transportation. Please add \$10 onto each option for couples and family counselling.

If you have too much or not enough capacity to pay for counselling at Rough Patch, we may be able to recommend other options for you.

\$70

+\$10 for couples/family counselling

Frequently experience barriers to paying for daily living costs

Qualify for Centrelink assistance from government (JobSeeker, Aged Care pension, Austudy, etc)

\$80

+\$10 for couples/family counselling

Often experience barriers to paying for daily living costs, such as significant debt and/or inconsistent income due to casual work, etc

\$90

+\$10 for couples/family counselling

Occasionally experience barriers to paying for daily living costs, such as debt, inconsistent income. May have high daily living costs due to family responsibilities or single income family

\$100

+\$10 for couples/family counselling

Can consistently manage daily living costs, has mostly consistent income, little or no debt, or living arrangements which share financial burden

WHAT IS A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE?

A social enterprise is a business that uses its revenue to improve communities, the environment or contribute positively to social wellbeing and advancement. For-profit businesses give their shareholders, including the owners, dividends of the profit made. In non-profit organisations, profits are reinvested and dividends are distributed to the community in the form of services, programs, employment and other resources. A social enterprise strengthens the community by providing a service that benefits everyone.

A non-profit social enterprise is not a registered charity. There are no tax breaks for the business, and they are not eligible for government funding in the same way charities and non-government organisations are.

At Rough Patch, we reinvest any profit back into the business to provide further affordable counselling and mental health supports to those who need us.

OUR CORE VALUES

Rough Patch's mission is to provide affordable, accessible and innovative mental health supports.

We do this in several ways;

- By providing counselling on a sliding scale to make it more affordable for people who wouldn't ordinarily be able to pay market rates for counselling,
- By offering time-limited counselling services (up to 20 sessions) in order to increase accessibility and decrease waitlist times,
- Having a non-clinical, welcoming mental health shop that decreases barriers and stigma around mental healthcare,
- By providing a supportive community of practice for counsellors to work within,
- By using an innovative social enterprise model,
- By pursuing innovative, non-traditional ideas about mental healthcare provision and governance,
- By using a social enterprise model to avoid relying on government funding.

Our organisational values include: compassion, empathy, inclusion, anti-oppressive stances, openness, transparency and innovation. We strive to uphold these values both within our community of practice, and in relation to our service users, customers and the wider community.

UNDERSTANDING THE ROUGH PATCH MODEL

Based on Canadian service Hard Feelings, Rough Patch aims to make mental health supports more affordable and accessible. Accessibility includes being able to access a counselling appointment without a months-long wait, being able to see a counsellor who meets a person's unique needs around culture, race, gender, sexuality or physical needs, and being able to access mental health supports that aren't just counselling, including books, products, resources and referrals.

Our model aims to support the following;

CLIENTS

We help clients access affordable, accessible counselling which meets their unique needs. When clients visit Rough Patch, they enter a non-traditional space that offers a new approach to mental health service delivery.

CUSTOMERS

We help customers with book and product recommendations and provide informal access to qualified mental health practitioners in a non-clinical, familiar space. Our shop offers new ways to access, learn and talk about mental health, fighting stigma and encouraging conversation. Rough Patch is a go-to destination for carefully curated books and self-care products.

COUNSELLORS

We provide a supportive community for counsellors to grow their skills and practice. We offer very low-cost room rentals, wrap-around business support services and professional development opportunities. Our model enables counsellors to do meaningful work that matters to them.

COMMUNITY

We provide information and mental health support to the community via partnerships, training and speaking engagements, and our affordable Employee Access Programs for micro and small businesses.

CONVERSATIONS

We foster conversations about innovative, non-traditional ways of promoting mental healthcare, and demonstrate the possibility of new ways of working.

COLLABORATION

We join with local businesses and organisations to expand our reach, without the usual barriers that come with working with government funding bodies.

MENTAL HEALTH SHOP

Our mental health shop is a key component of the Rough Patch model, and helps us meet our mission in several ways. The mental health shop is a welcoming reception space for our clients, and a place where community members can have access to mental health professionals in an informal setting. It's rare to be able to chat to a mental health practitioner without having to book an appointment, and Rough Patch aims to provide a space where brief conversations about mental health can be had. Customers can drop in and ask questions about mental health resources, ask for referrals to counsellors within Rough Patch or in external organisations, and to have conversations about mental health. This also contributes to destigmatising mental health conversations.

The shop also offers mental health resources for people who may not need, want or be ready for formal mental health supports such as counselling. We've had many customers drop into the shop and buy books for their personal development and mental wellness, some of whom come back for counselling later. We have also had customers drop in to ask what they can read or do to support a loved one who is struggling with their mental health.

The shop also aims to create revenue to support our sustainability and in time, we hope to use this revenue to offer group programs and further affordable mental health supports.



INFORMATION FOR COUNSELLORS

Rough Patch is a unique co-working space for private practice counsellors, with a focus on a supportive, inclusive and respectful community of practice. Rough Patch management supports you by providing low-cost room rentals, marketing and referral support, low-cost training and low-cost or free clinical supervision, professional development and networking opportunities, private practice mentoring, social media support, discounted books and mental health resources sold via the shop, and other benefits.

Rooms are rented in 3-hour blocks at \$15 per hour, on an ongoing, weekly basis between 9am-6pm. As with any other contracted rental arrangement, counsellors are required to pay for their weekly room booking regardless of client attendance. This ensures efficient and fair use of the rooms, consistency for clients, and significantly reduces administration costs for Rough Patch, ultimately contributing to our sustainability. Counsellors who join us are asked to commit to a minimum of 6 hours per week for a 12 month period.

When deciding if working at Rough Patch is for you, you must consider the costs of running your practice versus projected income. Like any new business, counsellors may find that it takes some time to begin getting client enquiries, and may not always have a full case-load. This is a normal part of private practice, and should factor into your decision making.

Some Rough Patch counsellors also work in private practice elsewhere. While we are supportive and want counsellors to thrive in all of their professional endeavours, it's important that you view Rough Patch clients separately to your private caseload, and don't rely on Rough Patch client referrals to build your private practice client numbers. On the rare occasion a client requests to see you in your private practice, there is a 3-month waiting period; this is for ethical reasons and to protect vulnerable clients from potential soliciting.

Rough Patch supports our counsellors by providing suggested clinical guidelines such as treatment agreements, cancellation policies, practice management templates, and other practice-related resources.

Rough Patch also actively seeks opportunities for professional development and training at low- or no-cost, and provides free monthly group supervision facilitated by a clinical supervisor.

CONTINUED

In order to foster our Community of Practice and benefit fully from the collective experience of our colleagues, we meet once per month for a community meeting and supervision.

As part of your rental agreement, Rough Patch provides comfortable, welcoming counselling rooms with air filters and new furniture, client amenities (mints, tea, fidget toys, etc), electricity and wireless internet, cleaning and disinfectant supplies to sanitise rooms between sessions, disposable masks if required, filtered water and environmentally-friendly disposable cups, use of kitchenette with microwave, fridge, tea and coffee, use of shared meeting room area and backyard for writing notes, eating lunch, etc, and a weekly cleaning service.

To join our community of practice, you must hold a graduate-level degree in counselling, psychology or social work, be registered with a professional association (eg; PACFA, ACA, APA, APS, AASW), hold your own professional indemnity and public liability insurance, manage your own accounting and clinical record keeping, and agree to work within our community of practice guidelines and sliding-scale fee structure, including attending monthly Community of Practice meetings.

Our counsellors are inclusive, anti-racist, anti-homophobic, queer-friendly, and anti-misogynist, and seek to actively grow as clinicians by undertaking ongoing formal and informal learning. Our counsellors are able to have non-defensive conversations and communications, and are open, respectful, curious and compassionate with clients, management and each other.



ABOUT THE FOUNDER

Amber Rules is a psychotherapist, counsellor, group therapist, clinical supervisor and mental health facilitator. She has lived experience of the impact and complexities of addiction in her family, and is a lifelong devotee of counselling as a means to healing, understanding, growing, and thriving.

Amber began her career in addiction rehabilitation settings and specialist outpatient counselling clinics in Eora/Sydney. She is the Clinical Director of Sydney Addictions Recovery, a private counselling practice which specialises in supporting individuals and families affected by addiction.

Throughout her counselling career, Amber has worked across varying counselling settings in public health, not-for-profit, and private health. While doing this work, she noticed the disparities between these differing settings, and how clients who are able to afford private counselling tend to have better access and health outcomes than those who can't. She also observed the sacrifices counsellors in community and not-for-profit settings make in order to do their job, often being paid far less than their privately-employed counterparts. These counsellors are also expected to work very long hours, pay for their own resources and training, and receive very little support and professional development, which leads to professional burn-out, compassion fatigue, and talented people leaving the industry.

All of these disparities led Amber to want to find a better way of providing counselling and mental health supports which relieved publicly-funded counselling services, paid counsellors a fairer wage for their expertise, and respected both the client and the counsellors doing the essential work of self-care and growth through therapy.

With the experience and support of Kate Scowen, a Canadian social worker who founded the Hard Feelings model, Amber opened Rough Patch in August 2020, along with an Advisory Committee and Volunteers.



HOW TO APPLY

Due to the high volume of enquiries we receive from therapists every week, we ask all applicants to complete an Expression of Interest. This helps us determine whether we'll be the right match for you, and vice versa. We'll be in touch once you have completed the questionnaire.

Before completing the form, we suggest reading ahead to see the full criteria.

Complete the EOI here:

<https://roughpatchcounselling.com/about/work-with-us/expression-of-interest/>

You can also keep up to date with us by following us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) or [Twitter](#), or sign up for our [mailing list](#)

...because everyone goes through
a rough patch sometimes