



# Online Counsellor Information Pack

Last updated  
June 2025

[www.roughpatchcounselling.com](http://www.roughpatchcounselling.com)

## WHO WE ARE

Rough Patch was originally founded with an aim to reduce barriers and increase access to mental health supports and resources in so-called Sydney; reduce the stigma associated with mental health; and provide counsellors with a supportive work environment that prioritises both client and counsellor wellbeing needs.

## ABOUT THE ROUGH PATCH TEAM

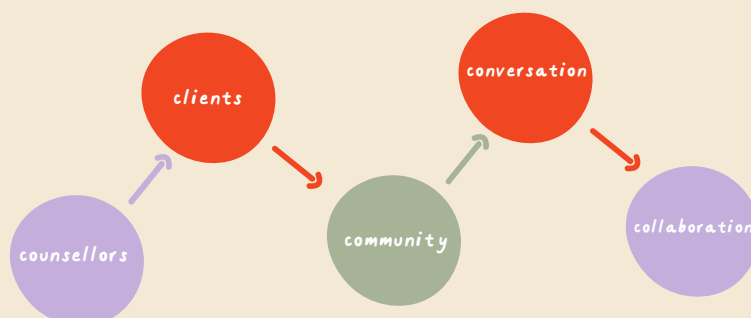
The Rough Patch team is a diverse and dynamic community of professional counsellors dedicated to transforming the way we think about mental health care.

As advocates for accessibility and inclusivity, we are passionate about breaking down barriers to mental health supports and ensuring that counselling services are available nation-wide, regardless of financial means.

Our innovative model as a social enterprise empowers counsellors to make a significant difference in the lives of their clients. In this way counsellors can feel fulfilled and satisfied with their impact, and clients can access high-quality, affordable support.

As part of our team, you will have the opportunity to work alongside like-minded individuals who are passionate about challenging systemic inequalities.

### our Rough patch model aims to support



we believe in a symbiotic relationship that benefits everyone on our team and beyond.

## HOW WE'RE DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY

- We facilitate the delivery of low-cost counselling, on a sliding scale from \$70-\$160 per session. We allow clients the dignity of choosing their fee-for-service, and we don't require them to prove their income.
- We support trained, professional counsellors in private practice who want to be a part of our innovative Community of Practice. Through this, counsellors thrive and clients access support in a timely and affordable manner.
- We are a non-profit social enterprise. The majority of our operational revenue is generated through counsellor memberships, and through occasional consulting and partnerships. This means that our dependence on public funding and private donations is limited, which ultimately strengthens our sustainability.



## OUR ONE-OF-A-KIND MODEL

Our non-profit social enterprise model, which is the first of its kind in Australia, reduces the cost of counselling and takes the pressure off free and low-cost services in the community that are often overwhelmed and underfunded.

Our model allows us to facilitate the delivery of low-cost counselling through Community of Practice membership fees from counsellors.

## OUR HISTORY

Rough Patch opened its doors on Gadigal and Wangal Country in so-called Sydney in August 2020 as a grassroots initiative with a clear mission: to provide affordable, accessible mental health support to people who need it. Based on the Hard Feelings model from Canada and founded by Clinical Psychotherapist, Amber Rules, the project emerged in response to the glaring gaps in affordable counselling and the overwhelming demand for mental health services, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The project was established with the aims of;

- Challenging the dominant ways we think about mental health care provision and funding in Australia
- To determine whether the model would work in the Australian market
- Providing affordable, accessible counselling to people who need it
- Creating an approachable, familiar physical environment where people could feel comfortable having stigma-free discussions about mental health, even if they weren't undertaking counselling sessions
- Providing a robust, supportive Community of Practice for clinicians to do meaningful work
- Encouraging discussion and discourse about mental health in the broader community



Originally, we operated out of a shopfront retail location. Our mental health shop stocked a counsellor-curated collection of books, resources, self-care items and gifts which encouraged conversation and built better mental health. People would drop in to chat about mental health and counselling, shop for resources, and access our counselling service.

In the 4 years our clinic and mental health shop was open, we saved our clients almost half a million dollars and provided over 8,000 low-fee counselling sessions.

At Rough Patch, we've built a thriving community of passionate and caring counsellors who are making a difference. Our social enterprise membership model provides counsellors with referrals, supervision, continuing education opportunities and a robust and professional support system. This allows our counsellors to focus on providing exceptional client care, while alleviating many of the stresses of private practice.

Rough Patch enables therapists to do deeply fulfilling work through our sliding-scale fees, ensuring quality mental health care is truly accessible to our community, while providing robust support for private practitioners.

## TRANSITION AND EXPANSION

After 4 years of in-person service provision, Rough Patch has transitioned to a Telehealth model. This has allowed us to expand our service nationally, and further reduce the operating costs for our counsellors and the organisation, so we can continue our mission of providing affordable, accessible mental healthcare. Our team is now delivering counselling through secure video platforms like Zoom.

## IN THE FUTURE



Rough Patch is an ever-evolving project that will continue to strive towards making mental health supports and resources more affordable and accessible to all, while exploring innovative new ways of challenging dominant mental health discourse and service provision.

While transitioning all operations to an online platform, our ultimate goal is to return to a physical space once financially viable. When this happens, counsellors will be able to choose to remain on a telehealth-only basis or expand their services to include face-to-face sessions.

We will continue to foster our tight-knit Community of Practice with like-minded counsellors who are dedicated to providing quality counselling within an anti-oppressive, inclusive and accessible framework.

## WHAT OUR MEMBERSHIP OFFERS

At Rough Patch we have built a supportive, warm and collegial community for our counsellors. We understand that therapists can feel isolated or miss out on learning and support opportunities in solo private practice.

Our community also gives counsellors the opportunity to learn from clinicians across a diverse range of specialties and backgrounds. Through case consultations, training and conversation, counsellors expand their clinical skills by being exposed to new perspectives and areas of expertise by their colleagues.

The monthly membership flat fee is \$325, billed monthly on the first day of the month. Subscriptions are billed in advance. This means your average weekly fee over the entire year is \$75 per week for unlimited clients. One ongoing \$75 appointment per week is all you need to cover the costs of the monthly subscription.



### Access to support and solidarity via the Counsellor Community of Practice

You'll be part of a community of professional counsellors committed to growth, compassion and anti-oppressive practice ideals. Our innovative model fosters connection amongst therapists and Rough Patch management, to support your learning and longevity as a therapist. Our counsellors actively seek to improve their clinical practice with ongoing learning, and are committed to therapeutic approaches which are non-pathologizing, trauma-informed, anti-racist, anti-ableist, queer-affirming, body-affirming, liberatory and intersectional.

### Your Profile on the Rough Patch Website

Your personalised profile will showcase your expertise to a national audience. Our continuous SEO, marketing and web strategies aim to drive traffic to the website to ensure your profile gets maximum visibility. Our website allows clients to easily search for counsellors based on their clinical specialties.

### Access to client referrals

Unlike many online referral services, directories or profit-share clinics, our flat monthly fee provides you with unlimited referrals - see as many clients as you wish with no increasing costs per referral.

### Free Clinical Supervision with a Registered Supervision Counsellor

You receive six hours of complimentary clinical supervision annually with Rough Patch management or approved external supervisors.

### Monthly facilitated Community of Practice meetings, Training and Peer Supervision

Our peer supervision and peer skill-sharing approach recognizes the wealth of knowledge within our collective. You'll have the opportunity to learn from colleagues across Australia who share your values, take part in reflective practices and receive support from Rough Patch management.

Every 4 weeks (on Wednesday evenings) our whole team comes together for our Community of Practice meeting and peer supervision.

You will also have the opportunity to join a Peer Pod, a smaller group of Rough Patch clinicians who come together as often as preferred for further learning and support in a small-group setting.

Every quarter, we host extended Community of Practice training sessions on a Sunday from 11am-3pm.

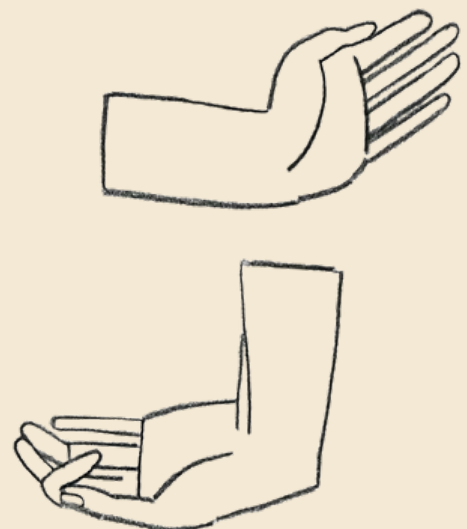
To ensure the Community of Practice continues to be a robust learning environment, we require all counsellors to attend at least 6 meetings per 12 month contract period as part of their commitment to the Rough Patch model.

### Reduced-fee expert supervision

Access discounts from Rough Patch-approved clinical supervisors. Our supervisors have a wealth of experience and offer their services at reduced fees to support the Rough Patch mission.

### Access to our online Community of Practice via Slack

Rough Patch utilises Slack to host our online Community of Practice. This private, secure space supports our counsellors with collaboration, case consultations, networking, referrals, sharing resources and knowledge, informal peer supervision, and more. Build meaningful, supportive connections across our national collective.





### [Access to bi-weekly online co-working sessions](#)

We host online co-working sessions twice a week to foster connection, encourage accountability and help manage procrastination. These sessions can be used to work on administrative or marketing tasks, or simply say hi to a friendly face.

### [Access to our warm referrals database of trusted clinicians](#)

Our warm referral network ensures referrals from and to ethical practitioners providing quality, anti-oppressive care aligned with our model. This is a great way to extend your professional community and ensure you're providing clients with trustworthy referrals.

### [Private practice and small business coaching](#)

We support you to effectively leverage technology, online platforms, and digital tools to efficiently manage your virtual practice. We teach clinicians the necessary skills and information to build a robust private practice that equips you for longevity and success as a small business owner.

Whether you're just starting out or are an experienced clinician exploring new opportunities, we help equip you with a clear roadmap and support system.

### [Access to clinical documentation and other private practice templates](#)

Our library of templates for intake paperwork, treatment plans, case notes and other clinical documentation streamlines your administrative processes for less hassle and more efficiency. You'll also have access to educational resources to enhance your work.

### [Directory, email marketing and blogs](#)

We increase Rough Patch's visibility by featuring our details on health and wellness directories, through targeted email campaigns and posting blogs on our website to optimise SEO and educate clients. Through these avenues, we promote the practice, draw clients and collaborators to our website, and ensure counsellors have quality content to promote themselves and the practice.



### Social media presence

Through our social media initiatives, we amplify and increase our visibility which allows potential clients and referrers to easily connect with us. Our social media provides an avenue to educate the public, destigmatise therapy and promote our accessible model of quality mental healthcare. We take a values-centred approach, never compromising clinical integrity for marketing's sake. Additionally, counsellors who join our Community of Practice don't need to create content for their own socials accounts - we do it for you, and you simply re-post and share.

### Member Perks

A part of our team, from time to time you'll enjoy exclusive discounts, referral codes and freebies from organisations and partners who support our work (depending on availability)

## Membership Benefits

### **business foundation**

our established business, admin and clinical processes allow you to focus immediately on providing quality counselling services

### **personal & professional satisfaction**

our social enterprise model empowers counsellors to make a significant difference in the lives of their clients

### **collaborative environment**

be part of a community that is aligned with your values, with whom you can consult and collaborate in order to enhance the quality of care provided to clients

### **visibility**

benefit from our growing brand recognition and market presence

### **growth and development**

ongoing training, workshops and supervision sessions to continuously expand skills and expertise

### **ethical & meaningful work**

be part of a non-pathologising, anti-oppressive care model that cultivates caring spaces for all identities

## TO BE CONSIDERED A CANDIDATE YOU MUST:

- Have a Bachelor or postgraduate degree in counselling, psychology or social work
- Be registered with a relevant professional association (PACFA, ACA, APA, APS, AASW)
- Hold your own professional indemnity and public liability insurance
- Have demonstrated experience in delivering counselling services to one or more of the following: adult individuals, couples or dyads, and families
- Be committed to practising through inclusive, non-pathologizing, anti-racist, anti-ableist, anti-homophobic, queer-friendly, and anti-misogynist frameworks and actively seek to further your education about these issues on an ongoing basis
- Be confident with online applications including Slack, Google Drive and Gmail Suite, or be willing to learn via video tutorials
- Be willing to actively participate in the Community of Practice, including attending at least 6 meetings per year
- Be willing to commit to joining us for a minimum 12-month period, in order to assure continuity of care for clients and support our financial sustainability as a grassroots, unfunded organisation

## ONLINE WORK-FROM-HOME REQUIREMENTS

- A workspace that is safe, quiet, private, confidential and interruption-free
- Stable and reliable internet connection, and a back-up communication process in case your or the client's connection fails during the session
- Your own computer or laptop
- Your own phone and email address for client communication
- Sufficient capacity to confidently use video conferencing software platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet or Microsoft Teams
- Your own method for taking payments, such as Stripe, Square or manual invoicing
- Your own secure note-taking method, such as client management software, or hard-copy notes which are stored in a locked filing cabinet

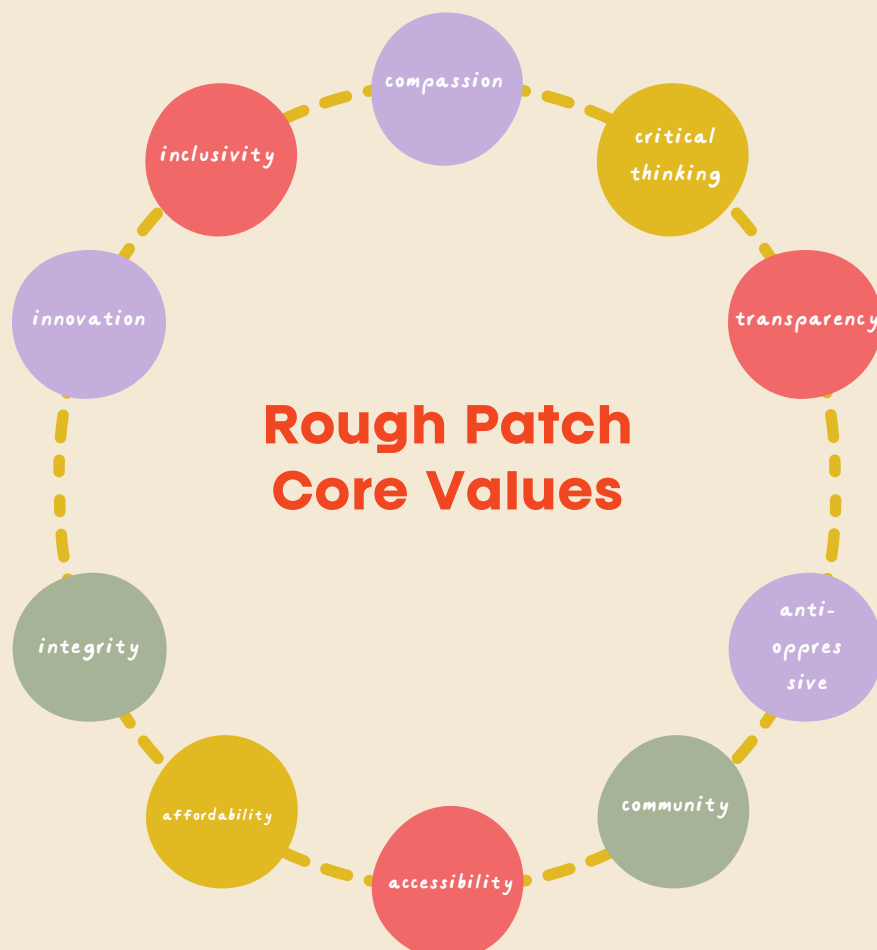
## ARE WE THE RIGHT FIT FOR YOU?

We refer to the work we do as low-bono. That means that while our counsellors receive payment for their services, they agree to work on a sliding fee-scale in order to serve the community and increase access to affordable, accessible and skilled mental healthcare. It is vitally important that you undertake work at Rough Patch with this understanding.

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.

In order to foster our Community of Practice, give and receive support, and benefit fully from the collective experience of our colleagues, we meet once per month for a Community of Practice meeting and supervision. This is an essential, non-negotiable part of the commitment to joining our Community of Practice.

Additionally, it is vital that practitioners joining us are committed to promoting themselves and the practice through marketing activities. You will receive robust support and mentoring to help you learn these skills, but it is an essential part of joining our collective that benefits your success as a small business owner.



## HOW IT WORKS FOR CLIENTS

Counsellors work in a time-limited way, helping clients feel equipped to undertake other counselling supports if necessary.

In order to keep our waitlists as short as possible, clients are able to access up to 30 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.

## A GUIDE TO ROUGH PATCH SLIDING SCALE FEES

This guide is to help clients and counsellors decide their fee for counselling at Rough Patch. Each person's situation is unique, so this is a guide only. Counsellors will discuss fees with clients during the first session.

First sessions are always a flat fee of \$70 per session (or \$80 for couples).

Together, you decide the appropriate fee for sessions based on client circumstances.

If clients do not have ongoing capacity to pay the lowest fee on the scale, counsellors may choose to conduct a single-session to make referrals and recommendations.



You may fit at the lower end of the scale if...

- You frequently experience barriers to paying for daily living costs, such as housing, food, healthcare, school or higher education, childcare, clothing and transportation
- You have high daily living costs due to family responsibilities or single income family
- You have casual or insecure employment, or no capacity to generate income
- You qualify for Centrelink assistance such as JobSeeker, Aged Care Pension, Austudy

You may fit at the higher end of the scale if...

- You live in a multiple-income household or have living arrangements which share financial burden
- You have few or no dependents
- You can consistently manage daily living costs
- You have consistent income
- You have little or no debt
- You want to support the ongoing financial viability of Rough Patch



## ABOUT THE FOUNDER

Amber Rules is a psychotherapist, clinical counsellor, group psychotherapist, clinical supervisor and mental health educator. 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 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 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.

Amber personally funded the start up and ongoing costs of operating Rough Patch, and her role as Director is pro-bono.

## ADVISORY BOARD & EXECUTIVE

As a non-profit social enterprise we are not legally obligated to have a governing board, however we firmly believe in maintaining the highest standards of transparency, accountability and governance. To uphold these values, we have established an Advisory Committee composed of people whose expertise, wisdom and commitment to our cause are invaluable assets.

This Advisory Committee plays a crucial role in guiding our organisations strategic direction, ensuring adherence to best practices, and fostering a culture of ethical conduct.