

Government Recognition

What you need to know

TAS Thought Leadership



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Why do Governments provide recognition to professions?

Generally, Governments will only provide formal recognition to professions or industries where there is a public interest need. Typically, this may result in legislation and the oversight of a regulatory body, such as the Australian Not-for-Profits and Charities Commission (ACNC) or the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Authority (AHPRA). Governments will also recognise professions where there is a level of self-regulation that is recognised by the Government as being in the public interest. These professions are deemed necessary to have recognised standards but are “trusted” to be able to manage these standards internally. Typical professions where this occurs include:

Accountancy, Architecture, Chiropractic, Computing, Engineering, Law, Pharmacy, Teaching, Veterinary, Medicine

In addition, the governments will recognise trades through educational qualifications and where deemed in the public interest will ensure the maintenance of standards through such measures as licencing and certification. This would include industries like hospitality, building, plumbing, real estate etc.

Any goal to achieve government recognition of a profession must come from the public interest standpoint. There are three main reasons for public interest recognition:

Safety – ie workplace O,H and S

Health – medical etc

Protection – finance, scammers, charities etc

It is important to also bear in mind that the Government has to be mindful of the ACCC rules regarding anti-competitive practices. Like all businesses, professionals and their associations must compete fairly and avoid engaging in anti-competitive behaviour such as cartels, exclusive dealing, unfair dealing or unconscionable conduct. By enforcing the *Competition and Consumer Act 2010*, the ACCC provides for the protection of professionals and consumers of professional services.

Why would For Purpose Organisations seek Government recognition and how would they do it?

Any Association, Society and For Purpose organisation needs to have a clear purpose behind any goal for government recognition and ideally will have a public interest angle for official government recognition. Boards would need to clearly identify a public interest angle to pursue for government recognition.

The long-term aim should be to build the reputation of the associations industry to a level (through accreditation and other means) that warrants acceptance with government even if not official recognition.

This requires a four-pronged approach:

- 1) Internal standards development to meet a required level of professionalism
- 2) External recognition via formal acceptance of professional standards
- 3) Public recognition of the profession
- 4) Regular interaction and acceptance by government and other industry bodies



Internal standards development

The Board and members should be setting professional standards for membership that will meet external scrutiny as a “true” profession. This may include accreditation, codes of conduct, disciplinary and compliance measures, continuous education and governance requirements such as insurance.

Accreditation provides a framework to manage resources, offer best practices, and strive for continuous improvement. This supports an organization’s sustainability, encourages its growth, and helps it to achieve measurable results. It does not on its own guarantee acceptance or even recognition by Government.

External formal recognition

This may require getting formal recognition of the internal standards and accreditation by a recognised body such as the Professional Standards Council (see <https://www.psc.gov.au/>). The Professional Standards Council is recognised by both State and Federal Governments and is supported by the Professional Standards Authority. It may be worth FCSIAPD investigating what the requirements are and whether they might be worth pursuing.

In addition, there are other organisations such as Standards Australia (<https://www.standards.org.au/>) or the International organisation for Standardisation (ISO) (<https://www.iso.org/home.html>) who may be able to work with FCSIAPD in regard to setting industry standards for members.

Public recognition

Typically this is achieved through self-promotion which may be through several angles including, public relations, lobbying, insurance support, media representation, advertising etc. The aim being to achieve formal public acceptance / government acceptance by becoming the recognised brand for quality etc.

Government recognition

Excluding regulatory recognition there are two main ways for associations to influence government and improve their level of acceptance. Firstly, by being seen and heard by the right people. Our recommendation is this is best done by representatives of the association getting in front of key government personnel and ministers. This may require the assistance of professional lobbyists.

The second way to influence government is quite simply to be involved. The association needs to be seen as an official voice and needs to be involved in any aspect of government decision-making which affects the industry. The association needs to be on consultative panels, needs to ensure it is a commentator on government policy and legal matters and needs to be available for consultation.

It may be difficult for for purpose organisations to obtain official government recognition unless it can show there is a clear public interest angle which would presumably be based around O,H&S and health requirements in the industry. If this is not attainable, TAS would recommend a review and detailed plan to achieve public recognition through the achievement of recognised standards and quality controls.



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