



Submission to Psychology Board of Australia

Issue: Acknowledgement of expertise in forensic psychology for Corrective Services NSW senior, specialist, and supervising psychologists

The current arrangements for grandfathering expert psychologists to the forensic endorsement under the national registration scheme to commence July 1st 2010 will disadvantage some forensic expert psychologists employed by Corrective Services NSW. Given the strictures against psychologists holding themselves as experts in area for which they lack the practice endorsement, this will mean that some very experienced specialist, senior and supervising psychologists that are currently providing expert advice in forensic psychology will no longer be entitled to do so. This will have implications for community safety.

Under the Crown Employees (Psychologists) Award, Corrective Services NSW psychologists have two pathways to acknowledge their specialist expertise applicable in the field of forensic psychology: an appropriate Masters degree in psychology or expertise adjudicated via a reclassification committee process. Existing Senior Psychologists were acknowledged for their expertise and grandfathered to the newly created title of Senior Specialist Psychologist at the time of the Award (2006). Other psychologists who lack the appropriate Masters degree have applied to the reclassification committee to have their expertise acknowledged and have been granted titles consistent with their expertise.

I attach to this submission copies of the Crown Employees (Psychologists) Award and the Guidelines for Reclassification. From these documents, it can be seen that a high level of expertise in psychological work with complex cases is required for every level of psychologist classification above psychologist grade. Corrective Services NSW currently employs a number of Specialist, Senior, Senior Specialist, and Chief Psychologists with many years of expertise (in some cases more than 20 years), who would not receive forensic endorsement under the current PBA grandfathering arrangements. Some of these have had their expertise acknowledged by universities who ask them to provide workshops and training for forensic Masters students, as well as supervised placements. Others have been invited experts at conferences and had work published in peer reviewed journals.

If Corrective Services NSW psychologists who hold titles under the Award do not have their forensic expertise acknowledged by the forensic practice endorsement on their national registration, then their capacity to deliver expert advice to courts and parole authorities may be questioned by defendants and their legal advisors. Indeed, the PBA strictures on advertising would preclude these psychologists from representing themselves as experts in forensic psychology. Consequently, community

safety may be placed at risk by the lack of this expert advice to courts and parole authorities.

If Corrective Services NSW psychologists who hold titles under the Award do not have their forensic expertise acknowledged by the forensic practice endorsement on their national registration, then their expertise in providing professional supervision to new psychology staff may be questioned. Consequently some psychologists, who may hold the forensic endorsement through recently completing a Masters degree may discount the expertise of the supervision provided by the experienced Senior or Supervising Psychologist who lacks the forensic endorsement. The community may be placed at risk by such psychologists not placing sufficient trust in their supervisor's expert advice.

Recommendations:

1. That all permanent employees of Corrective Services NSW that are classified above psychologist grade of the Crown Employees (Psychologists) Award at the time of national registration be given the practice endorsement of forensic psychology on their national registration.
2. That all permanent employees of Corrective Services NSW that are reclassified above psychologist grade of the Crown Employees (Psychologists) Award prior to 2013, or the revision of the Crown Employees (Psychologists) Award if this is earlier, be given the practice endorsement of forensic psychology on their national registration

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Date: 14/04/2010