

Michael Di Mattia
Counselling Psychologist
Monash University
Ph: 03 9904 4223
michael.dimattia@monash.edu

Professor Brin Grenyer
Chair, Psychology Board of Australia
G.P.O. Box 9958
Melbourne Vic 3001

9th September, 2010

Re: Guidelines on Area of Practice Endorsements

Dear Professor Grenyer,

I refer to *Consultation Paper 5 – Proposed Revisions to Guidelines on Area of Practice Endorsements* and wish to provide feedback on the description of counselling psychology. I am particularly concerned that all references to diagnosis and mental health disorders have been excluded from the description of counselling psychology. It seems that all seven of the descriptions of 'areas of practice' have been taken from the content of the corresponding APS College descriptions (www.psychology.org.au/community/specilaist/). In almost every instance, these descriptions are exact matches for the first two sentences of each APS College description. However, in the case of the PBA description for 'counselling psychology', the reference to 'mental health disorders' has been removed.

Here are the first two sentences describing counselling psychologists, which appears on the APS website:

Counselling psychologists are specialists in the provision of psychological therapy. They provide psychological assessment and psychotherapy for individuals, couples, families and groups, and treat a wide range of psychological problems and mental health disorders.

In comparison, here is the description the Psychology Board of Australia offers:

Counselling psychologists are specialists in the provision of psychological therapy. They provide psychological assessment and psychotherapy for individuals, couples, families and groups, and treat a wide range of psychological problems.

I ask that the PBA amend their definition of counselling psychology to acknowledge specialist knowledge in the treatment of mental health disorders. There are a number of documents that support the training and expertise counselling psychologists have in this domain.

First, I draw your attention to the 'Checklist of Specialist Skills and Knowledge' for counselling psychology on the website of the Psychologists Board of Western Australia (<http://www.psychboard.wa.gov.au/documents/counsellingchecklist.pdf>). This document makes it clear that diagnosis of psychopathology is a competency required of counselling psychologists. Second, the APS brochure on counselling psychology confirms that a specialist area of practice in counselling psychology is the diagnosis and treatment of mental health disorders (<http://www.psychology.org.au/community/specilaist/counselling/>).

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Di Mattia', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michael Di Mattia, MAPS
Counselling Psychologist