

Dear Brin

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RE: GUIDELINES FOR ENDORSEMENT OF COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY

I am writing to you in regard to guidelines associated with endorsement for **counselling Psychology**. I have been registered as a counselling psychologist in WA since 2002. I have also supervised several psychologists for registration as a counselling psychologist with The Psychologist Board of WA. Additionally I was employed at Curtin University in the Masters of Psychology Program for seven years in which I supervised students engaged in placements in a range of mental health settings. I believe I am well placed to comment on the competencies of counselling psychologists in WA.

I have outlined several issues that need to be acknowledged and clarified in the proposed guidelines for counselling Psychology:

1. Students studying **counselling psychology at Curtin University (Master of Psychology Program)** are required to participate in three placements (40 days each). These placements routinely involve assessment, diagnosis, case-formulation, treatment planning, exploration and practice of evidence-based interventions and follow-up of client and treatment outcomes. I personally supervised students who were engaged *in The Rockingham kwinana division of General Practice*. Students provided psychological treatment to clients through the *Better Outcomes in Mental Health Program and Better Access to Mental Health initiative*. Supervision focussed on all aspects of professional work relevant to this mental health setting. Diagnosis and treatment of the full range of mental health disorders was integral to the process.
2. The Psychologist Board of WA has very clear and specific criteria for registration as a counselling psychologist. This criteria centers on assessment and treatment of mental health disorders. In fact, the checklist of specialist skills and knowledge clearly indicates that assessment, diagnosis and treatment of psychopathology is a necessary skill for registration as a counselling psychologist.

The existing guidelines do not emphasize the competency of counselling psychologists in treating mental health disorders, which I believe is a significant oversight that needs to be amended immediately.

3. Training in counselling psychology at tertiary level and in postgraduate supervision also includes the design and implementation of group based therapy. This has become one of the major treatment approaches for private psychiatric hospitals in WA. Counselling Psychologists have been responsible for implementing group programs in the treatment of mood disorders, anxiety disorders (GAD, panic disorder, Social Phobia, OCD) substance abuse and PTSD. However the existing guidelines do not emphasize these important clinical skills demonstrated by counselling psychologists.

The omission of this skill set from the proposed guidelines represents a significant distortion of the skills and competency of registered counselling psychologists. The guidelines must be amended to accurately represent the range and depth of knowledge and competencies of counselling psychologists.

In conclusion counselling psychology in WA has been strictly monitored by The Psychologist Board of WA to ensure the highest standards of practice in the treatment of **mental health disorders**. Please amend the guidelines so that they accurately represent the extensive knowledge and skills of our highly trained group.

Yours Sincerely

**Mary-Anne Paino
Counselling Psychologist**