

Welcome to the second edition of the Psychology Board of Australia's (the Board) Connections newsletter. This and the first edition are available on the Board's website.

From the Chair



Why 'peer consultation'?

The Psychology Board of Australia's role is to protect the public and guide the psychology profession. Part of this role involves developing Codes, Guidelines and Standards for psychologists. The Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Standard requires all registered psychologists to undertake 30 hours of mandatory CPD each year. A central component of this CPD is 10 hours a year of 'peer consultation'. This is defined as 'supervision and consultation in individual or group format, for the purposes of professional development and support in the practice of psychology and includes a critically reflective focus on the practitioner's own practice'.

Psychologists distinguish themselves by their scientific training, beginning in first year psychology at university, where the discipline of psychology, the science of mind and behaviour, is introduced. Scientific knowledge in our discipline develops through peer review,

of scientific articles, of grants, and also through peer review of practices. Critical and scholarly peer consultation actualises the 'scientist-practitioner' model, and ensures that psychologists have their tools of trade – their scientific and human skills – calibrated on a regular basis.

The Board unfortunately has to address instances where a psychologist's practice falls below acceptable standards, leaving clients harmed and the public's trust in the profession challenged. Such instances can occur in all phases of a professional career, and experience or expertise does not provide any additional protection. The Board's view is that those with endorsement often practise in areas with higher risks and greater expectations by the public, and that is why they have additional obligations in the CPD standard. I am grateful to all psychologists who provide, as well as receive, peer consultation, and together we can maintain the integrity of the profession.

**Professor Brin Grenyer,
Chair, Psychology Board
of Australia.**

See also the [CPD section of this newsletter](#)

Missed Edition 1?
[Download a copy here](#)

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Registration renewal reminder

- 30 November for all (even those who renewed on 30 June)
- Renew online and on time
- See [page 3](#) for more details

Meet the Board's community members

The Psychology Board of Australia (PsyBA) is made up of 12 members appointed by Government, including four Community members. These were previously referred to as consumer members under the previous state based registration system. Under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009, as in force in each state and territory, at least two community members, who must not be or have previously been registered as psychologists, must be appointed to the Board.

The Board's current community members are Irene Hancock, Chris O'Brien, Fiona McLeod and Antonia Dunne who have all previously served on State Boards and together have a combined 64 years experience in health regulation.

Community members share the same responsibilities as practitioner Board members, and have strong involvement in all decisions made. All Board members share the task of ensuring the Board acts in the public interest so that registered psychologists throughout Australia have the relevant skills, qualifications and experience to practise competently and safely and that any complaints are managed in a fair and timely manner.



Irene Hancock is a retired Registered Nurse and Midwife. As a community representative she has served on and chaired several government bodies, including 15 years on the NSW Psychologist Registration Board and six years as chair of the Consumer Advisory Committee, NSW Health Care Complaints Commission. She was National President of the Association for the Welfare of Child Health (AWCH) for 16 years; the organisation responsible for 24 hour visiting by parents of hospitalised children, parent accommodation and parental presence during induction of anaesthesia.



Chris O'Brien has a legal background and is the Employee Relations (HR) Manager for a major aged care provider in Queensland. He has served on the State Physiotherapy Board and is currently the Chair of the Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council.



Fiona McLeod is Victoria's Energy and Water Ombudsman, a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, and has served on a range of profit and not for profit Boards/ Committees for over 20 years.



Antonia Dunne is a social worker by profession, employed by the Family Court as Senior Family Consultant for Tasmania. She has previously served on three other statutory boards and is currently on the Anglicare Tasmania Board, having just completed five years as Chair.

Public Forums on the National Scheme

The Psychology Board of Australia continues to hold public forums on the transition to the national registration and accreditation scheme (NRAS). This is a great opportunity for psychologists and interested members of the community to meet the Board and discuss matters affecting psychology practice in Australia.

Psychologists in Darwin and Canberra are encouraged to attend the forthcoming forums.

The Board recently held forums in Perth, Adelaide, Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne, where more than 350 people attended. Some of the issues raised and addressed include:

- Overview of national scheme
- Role of National Boards and Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA)
- Transition to the new scheme
- Area of practice endorsements
- New mandatory CPD requirements
- Role of the Psychology Board of Australia
- Roles of state and national offices.

Upcoming Events

September 2011

Northern Territory Forum

October 2011

Australian Capital Territory Forum

Please check the Board's website one month before the event for details and information about how to attend.

Renewals due 30 November: renew online and on time

The Board encourages all registered psychologists to check when their registration is due – and make sure they renew online, on time.

From November 2011, all psychologists with general and non-practising registration will be due to renew by 30 November each year, including some practitioners who renewed earlier this year. [From 30 November 2011 the registration dates for psychologists with general and non-practising registration will be aligned, and this will be the ongoing renewal date for psychologists in Australia. Provisional psychologists will continue to be renewed from the anniversary of their application, until they are granted general registration when their registration will be aligned with the rest of the profession.]

Renewing your registration: step-by-step

Online renewal is the easiest way to renew and usually only takes between two and 48 hours, depending on the method of payment and whether the application contains any adverse declarations.

1. **Renew online** – most practitioners can renew their registration online using their unique contact number (user ID). If you do not have a unique contact number, you can get one by submitting an online enquiry form at www.ahpra.gov.au/about-ahpra/contact-us/make-an-enquiry.aspx and selecting *User ID* as the category of enquiry, or calling 1300 419 495. The most common reason for delays in processing a renewal application is incomplete applications – please take the time to read and understand the requirements before submitting your application.

2. **Provide email address** – make sure that the contact details AHPRA has on file for you are current and include a valid email address. This will allow AHPRA to contact you with renewal reminders and the Board to contact you with other important information affecting psychology practice in Australia. Setting an email account to receive communications from AHPRA and the Board avoids misdirection to an account junk box and ensures our messages are getting through.
3. **Check your application online** – after you have submitted your application you can check that it has been received at www.ahpra.gov.au/Registration/Renewal-Received-Confirmation.aspx. As long as your application has been received before the due date, you are able to keep practising while it is being processed.

When your renewal application has been confirmed, you will receive a renewal certificate and pop-out wallet sized card confirming your registration, and your name will be added to the National Register of Psychologists.

What happens if I miss the due date?

Psychologists who forget to renew their registration by the due date have a one month late period when applications can be processed. Psychologists who do not renew by the due date or within the late period will no longer be registered to practise psychology, and are therefore not able to practise. If anyone in this group wishes to keep practising they will need to apply again to register, through the Board's fast track application process.

For more information

- Refer to the website www.psychologyboard.gov.au
- Visit www.ahpra.gov.au under *Contact us* to lodge an online enquiry form
- For registration enquiries: 1300 419 495 (within Australia) +61 7 3666 4911 (overseas callers)

Have your say: current consultations

The National Law allows the Board to develop and approve codes and guidelines to help practitioners understand their responsibilities under the National Law and to clarify the Board's expectations. The National Law requires the Board to undertake wide-ranging consultation on proposed registration standards and codes and guidelines.

Consultation documents are early drafts that are later reviewed by the Board and amended as required. The amendments reflect the feedback provided while maintaining the Board's primary role of protecting the public.

When there are consultations open for input, they will be published on the Board's website at [Current Consultations](#).

The Board recently consulted on a proposal to amend the Provisional registration standard to include the requirements of the 5+1 pathway to General registration. All psychologists were encouraged to read the consultation paper and consider making a submission. Submissions for this consultation closed 29 July 2011. Details of new consultations are always published in the Board's monthly communiqué and all psychologists are encouraged to read the consultation papers and get involved in proposals affecting the profession.

This year the Board has consulted on a number of matters including the proposed revisions to the professional indemnity insurance arrangements registration standard, and the guidelines on a national psychology examination for general registration. The Board also sought feedback on the exposure draft of the guidelines for area of practice endorsements in late 2010. Further review of these documents is underway taking into account the feedback received in the consultation process. These and other past consultation papers, including a summary of each consultation and submissions to the Ministerial Council to date, can be viewed on the Board's website at [Past Consultations](#).

Registration standards

The Board expects all registered psychologists to meet its [registration standards](#). Make sure you are familiar with them and understand your responsibilities under the National Law.

Notifications

One of the ways in which the Board protects the community is by investigating notifications and, when necessary, subsequently managing registered psychologists when they have been found to have engaged in unprofessional conduct, unsatisfactory professional performance or when their health is impaired and they may place the public at risk.

The Board is 'notified' of an issue. The word 'notification' is deliberate and reflects that the Board is not a complaints resolution agency. It is a protective jurisdiction and its role is to protect the public by dealing with psychologists who may be putting the public at risk as a result of their conduct, professional performance or health.

The information below describes the process of dealing with a notification about registered psychologists under the National Law.

Who can make a notification?

Anyone can make a notification to AHPRA, which receives it on behalf of the Board. While registered health practitioners, employers and education providers may have mandatory reporting obligations imposed by the National Law, the majority of reports are voluntary. Typically, notifications are made by clients or their families, other health practitioners, employers and representatives of statutory bodies. The National Law provides protection from civil, criminal and administrative liability for persons who make a notification in good faith.

Grounds for voluntary notifications

Grounds for voluntary notifications about registered psychologists include that:

- the practitioner's professional conduct is or may be of a lesser standard than that expected by the public or the practitioner's professional peers
- the knowledge, skill or judgement possessed, or care exercised by the practitioner is or may be below the standard reasonably expected
- the practitioner is not, or may not be, a suitable person to hold registration
- the practitioner has, or may have, an impairment
- the practitioner has, or may have, contravened the National Law
- the practitioner has, or may have, contravened a condition of his or her registration or an undertaking given to the Board and/or
- the practitioner's registration was, or may have been, obtained improperly.

Preliminary assessment

AHPRA and the Board take seriously all notifications. After AHPRA receives a notification, the Board conducts a preliminary assessment to decide whether or not:

- the notification relates to a registered psychologist
- the notification relates to a matter that is grounds for notification and
- it is a notification that could also be made to a health complaints entity.

In deciding that a matter is grounds for a notification, the Board can consider a single notification or a number of notifications that suggest a pattern of conduct. The Board can also consider notifications made to a health complaints entity.

Relationship with the health complaints entity

The National Law requires the Board and the relevant health complaints entity in each state and territory to share complaints and notifications and to try to agree on how to deal with each complaint or notification. If the health complaints entity and the Board cannot agree, the most serious action proposed must be taken.

Board can decide to take no further action

The Board may decide to take no further action in relation to a notification if:

- the Board believes the notification is frivolous, vexatious, misconceived or lacking in substance; or
- it is not practicable for the Board to investigate or deal with the notification, given the amount of time that has elapsed since the matter that is the subject of the notification occurred; or
- the person to whom the notification relates has not been, or is no longer, registered and it is not in the public interest to investigate or deal with the notification; or
- the subject matter of the notification has already been dealt with adequately by the Board; or
- the subject matter of the notification is being dealt with, or has already been dealt with adequately by another entity.

The decision to take no further action can be made at any time during the assessment or investigation of a notification, but only after careful consideration of the issues raised. A decision by the Board to take no further action in relation to a notification does not prevent the Board or a Tribunal (the independent authority in the courts system in each state and territory) taking the notification into consideration at a later time, as part of a pattern of conduct or practice by the psychologist. The Board will analyse the concerns raised in all types of notifications and uses this information to help educate the profession and share the lessons from the concerns raised.

Investigations

The Board may decide to investigate a registered psychologist if it believes that:

1. the practitioner has or may have an impairment;
2. the way the practitioner practises is or may be unsatisfactory; or
3. the practitioner's conduct is or may be unsatisfactory.

The Board may also investigate to ensure that a practitioner is complying with conditions imposed on their registration or an undertaking given by the practitioner to the Board. The investigation is conducted by an investigator appointed by the Board. How the investigation is conducted depends on the facts of the case. It will usually involve the investigator seeking extra information to inform the Board's decision. This may include:

- further information from the notifier
- responses and explanations from the practitioner about whom the notification was made
- information from other practitioners involved in the care of the patient
- expert opinions
- police reports, and/or
- data from other sources such as pharmacy records, Medicare Australia data and so on.

In almost every case, the psychologist being investigated will know about the investigation. They are given notice of the investigation and information about what is being investigated. The only exception is when the Board believes that giving notice may seriously prejudice the investigation, or may place someone's health or safety at risk or may place someone at risk of harassment or intimidation. After analysing the facts of the case, the investigator prepares a report for the Board's consideration.

Health assessment

The Board may require a psychologist to undergo a health assessment if it believes that the practitioner may have an impairment. The health assessment is conducted by an experienced and appropriately-qualified, independent psychologist or medical practitioner. The Board pays for the assessment and the assessor writes a report for the Board. The practitioner who was assessed is given a copy of the report unless the report contains information that may be prejudicial to the practitioner's health or wellbeing, in which case it is given to a medical practitioner or psychologist nominated by the practitioner. After receiving the report, the practitioner who was assessed must discuss the report, and ways of dealing with any adverse findings, with a person nominated by the Board.

Performance assessment

The Board may require a psychologist to undergo a performance assessment if it believes that the way the practitioner practises the profession is or may be unsatisfactory. Performance assessments are usually conducted by two (or more) independent psychologists who have the expertise to assess a practitioner in a particular field of practice (or area of endorsement). The Board pays for the assessment and the assessors write a report for the Board. The practitioner who was assessed is given a copy of the report unless it contains information that may be prejudicial to their health or wellbeing. After receiving the report, the practitioner who was assessed must discuss the report, and ways of dealing with any adverse findings, with a person nominated by the Board.

Actions the Board can take

The Board has the power to take a range of actions at any time after receiving a notification or after an investigation or a health or performance assessment.

These actions include:

- a decision to take no further action
- referral to another entity such as a health complaints entity or
- the Board can take immediate action if this is necessary to protect the health and safety of the public. More detail on this power was published in [Issue 1 of Connections](#).

If the Board believes that a practitioner's conduct or performance was unsatisfactory or his or her health was impaired, it can:

- caution the practitioner and/or
- accept an undertaking from them and/or
- impose conditions on the practitioner's registration.

Alternatively, the Board may decide to refer matters to a:

1. Panel:
 - a) Health Panel or
 - b) Performance and Professional Standards Panel

Or

2. Tribunal

More information on Panel and Tribunal hearings will be published in future editions of the Board Connections.

Spotlight on the work of the Board

Underway

The Board has an extensive work program underpinning its areas of focus over the next 12 months. The program includes:

- Developing supervisor training programs
- Introducing a 5+1 pathway for provisional psychologists – currently under consultation
- Revising the *Guidelines on area of practice endorsements*
- Developing a National Psychology Examination for General Registration
- Revising the *Professional indemnity insurance (PII) arrangements registration standard* and developing a PII guideline
- Developing a searchable database of Board-approved supervisors
- Undertaking public forums on the NRAS in all capital cities and some regional centres
- Establishing a research project to evaluate alternative options for demonstrating English language proficiency

- Developing an email database to allow direct email communication with registrants
- Developing a consistent approach for recording qualifications in the AHPRA database so they can be published consistently on the Register of practitioners

Keep an eye on the website for more information as projects are finalised and monitor invitations to participate in consultations about important issues.

Completed Projects

A number of Board projects have already been concluded with some concrete and substantial outcomes to benefit the community and the profession. These include:

- [Area of practice endorsement for health and community psychology](#)
- [Introduction of policy on working in addition to placements for provisional psychologists](#)
- Standards, guidelines and fact sheet on registration and training requirements published on the [Board website](#).

Continuing Professional Development

Continuing professional development (CPD) is the means by which members of the profession maintain, improve and broaden their knowledge, expertise and competence, and develop the qualities required in their professional lives. Professional development is an ongoing process which continues over the course of a career, adapting to changes in practice environments, professional domains, new information, and community needs. Carefully tailored professional development can assist competency and relevance in practice, which in turn assists members of the public who seek psychology services.

Under the National Registration scheme CPD is now mandatory for all health practitioners and the requirements for psychologists are set out in the [Continuing professional development registration standard](#).

The CPD requirements for psychologists are:

- Plan – develop a learning plan and identify learning needs and goals
- Undertake 10 hours per annum of peer consultation

- Undertake 20 hours per annum of professional development activities
- Log – keep a record of the CPD you complete
- Reflect – maintain a CPD journal.

Detailed information on CPD is included in the [CPD Guidelines](#) and the [CPD Fact Sheet](#).

The first CPD cycle under the new national scheme ends on 30 November 2011 and all psychologists with General registration are required to renew their registration at that time. Psychologists will be required to declare on their renewal that they have understood and met the requirements of the CPD standard. Submission of the CPD plan, activity log and reflective journal is not required unless selected for an audit.

The Board is currently working with other National Boards and AHPRA to develop an effective and efficient approach to auditing practitioner compliance with Board registration standards, as required under the National Law. The Board will continue to update the profession on its approach to this issue.

Area of practice endorsement

Endorsement of a psychologist's registration is a legal mechanism under the National Law through which particular groups of registrants, who have an additional qualification and advanced supervised practice recognised by the Board can be identified to the public, employers, and anyone else accessing the public register.

It is important to recognise that endorsement of a scope of practice did not exist in Australia before 1 July 2010. In Australia, all psychologists are registered on a single register. The notation of an endorsement is not a separate specialist register. Nor is it based on experience derived during the course of a professional career.

Nomenclature

The Board would like to clarify its nomenclature.

The National Board is called the Psychology Board of Australia or 'the Board'. To avoid confusion with other boards in the National Scheme, including the boards for physiotherapy, pharmacy, and podiatry, the Psychology Board of Australia avoids using the abbreviation PBA. The colloquial terminology for the Board is PsyBA (e.g. for use in emails). The preference is to use the Psychology Board of Australia ('the Board').

The Board has delegated individual registration and notification decisions to the State and Territory (Regional) Boards, and the National Board deals with policy issues. The Regional boards are called the 'State and Territory Boards of the Psychology

Board of Australia' as per s.36 of the National Law. So for example, the correct term is the ACT, Tasmania and Victoria Board of the Psychology Board of Australia (or the ACT, TAS & VIC Regional Board colloquially). For NSW, the correct term is the New South Wales Board of the Psychology Board of Australia (or colloquially the NSW Regional Board).

NSW is known as a co-regulatory jurisdiction in that the National Law applies to registration and accreditation matters as it does in all the other states and territories, while the Health Care Complaints Commission (HCCC) or NSW Council is responsible for notifications (complaints) in that jurisdiction under its own legislation.

What's on @ www.psychologyboard.gov.au

The best way to keep up to date with important Board issues for the profession and the community is through the [Board's website](http://www.psychologyboard.gov.au) at www.psychologyboard.gov.au. The Board publishes all updates, news and important announcements on its website. It invites comment and feedback on policies and issues for consultation through it. A staged upgrade of the website, to make information and services more accessible to practitioners and the community, is scheduled in the coming months.

Email updates

The Board is keen to communicate directly with registrants in a timely and cost effective way – and that means by email. Please consider giving the Board or AHPRA your email address (via your practitioner login on online services) so we can keep in direct contact about important issues facing our profession.

Further information can be found on the Psychology Board of Australia's website www.psychologyboard.gov.au.

Psychology Board of Australia

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