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From the Chair

Minimising complaints to the Board

The role of the Psychology Board of Australia (the National Board) is to protect the public and guide the profession. There are a number of powers given to the Board under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law¹, including deciding the requirements for registration of psychologists, and approving accredited programs of study as providing qualifications for registration. These measures, including arrangements such as the National Psychology Exam, help to ensure that registrants have the necessary knowledge and skills to undertake safe and competent practice. Another way the Board protects the public is to receive and deal with notifications and complaints by the public about the conduct or performance of psychologists.

1 The Health Practitioner National Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law).

From July 2012 to June 2013, there were 471 notifications and complaints about psychologists across Australia. Based on the assessment of these complaints, immediate action to suspend or impose conditions on registration was considered in 22 cases. These are usually the most serious cases, although a number of other actions were taken by the Board over the year, including issuing cautions, reprimands, and imposing conditions on a practitioner's registration.

An analysis of the typical profile of complaints and outcomes has been published (Grenyer, B.F.S., and Lewis, K. (2012) 'Prevalence, prediction, and prevention of psychologist misconduct', *Australian Psychologist*, 47, 68-76). The findings showed that poor communication was the most frequent reason for a member of the public to complain (35.5 per cent of complaints), including failing to communicate such factors as the limits of confidentiality, how reports would be used, the length and type of treatment proposed, and costs of treatment. It also includes examples of a psychologist being rude and insensitive to the client. Issues to do with poor performance, including poor report writing or business practices, were also common. Less common, but more serious issues include boundary violations (9.7 per cent).

Senior, highly qualified psychologists tend to receive the most complaints, perhaps because they are involved in areas that involve the most complexity, but also perhaps because of a drift in professional standards due to not remaining current with new techniques and research. While male psychologists attract proportionally more complaints, female psychologists are also subject to a significant number of complaints.

We found that over a 30-year career, about 20 out of every 100 psychologists can expect to be the subject of a complaint from the public and of these, two will receive a serious misconduct complaint. Serious misconduct complaints may lead to deregistration where proven. Ways to minimise complaints include talking about your most difficult cases in peer consultation, adhering to quality evidence-based practice standards, having a respectful professional attitude to all clients, and ensuring clear boundaries between your private life and professional work.

Professor Brin Grenyer

Chair, Psychology Board of Australia



Consultation process

Have your say: consultations

Consultation is an important part of the National Board's engagement with psychologists and members of the public. The feedback provided is greatly valued, and informs the Board's development of registration standards, codes, and guidelines. The Board is currently consulting on standards for English language skills and mandatory criminal history checks. To read new and past consultation papers go to the Board's website under the [News](#) tab.

Board member profile: Queensland practitioner



Emeritus Professor Gina Geffen AM is a practitioner member of the Psychology Board of Australia from Queensland. She is currently Emeritus Professor of Psychology at the University of Queensland, and Director of Clinical Psychology at the Brisbane Pain Rehabilitation Service.

Most recently, she has been selected to receive the prestigious Paul Satz-INS Career Mentoring Award from the International Neuropsychological Society (INS). The award is bestowed upon an individual whose mentoring/teaching activities have made a profound impact on the careers of students in the field of neuropsychology. The award will be conferred at the next congress of the INS to be held in Jerusalem in July 2014. Prof. Geffen will also deliver a keynote address at the congress.

The mission of the INS is to promote the international and interdisciplinary study of brain-behavioural relationships throughout the lifespan. The INS's emphasis is on science, education, and the applications of scientific knowledge and it has more than 4,500 members throughout the world.

In 1988, Prof. Geffen was appointed to Australia's first Chair of Neuropsychology as Julia Farr Foundation Professor at Flinders University of South Australia, before moving to a personal Chair at the University of Queensland in 1991. In a career spanning 50 years she has mentored several hundred postgraduate students and junior colleagues. Her 172 publications have included 139 of her mentees as co-authors.

Her scientific, teaching, and professional accomplishments have been recognised by election as Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences of Australia, of the Australian Psychological Society, and of the Australian Society for Brain Impairment.

In the Queen's Birthday Honours of 2007, she was made a Member of the Order of Australia, General Division, (AM) for services to the psychology profession and the community.

In 2008, she received the President's Award for Distinguished Services to the Australian Psychological Society, and Flinders University conferred an honorary Doctorate of Science for her scientific and teaching contributions to neuropsychology.

In 2010, she was appointed a Foundation Member of the Psychology Board of Australia, having previously chaired the Queensland Registration Board for a decade.

She remains active as a clinician, researcher, trainee supervisor, and mentor.

Call for expressions of interest for panel appointment – Northern Territory and Western Australia only

The National Board invites expressions of interest from experienced psychologists interested in being included on an *Approved persons list* for panel appointment.

The National Board is seeking candidates who practise and reside in the Northern Territory and Western Australia.

Under the National Law, a National Board convenes health panels and performance and professional standards panels when it is required to hold hearings into specific health, performance or conduct matters for individual registered health professionals.

Such panels consist of members chosen from a National Board-approved list of persons.

Appointments to the *Approved persons list* are for up to three years, with eligibility for re-appointment, and are expected to begin in November 2013.

For more information on the National Board, visit www.psychologyboard.gov.au.

For information on the panel member role and the application process, please download the application guide and application forms from the [Board member recruitment](#) page on the AHPRA website, or for general enquiries please contact boardappoint@ahpra.gov.au.

If you have applied for a board, committee or panel member vacancy within the past 12 months and want to be considered for this vacancy please email boardappoint@ahpra.gov.au to: express your interest

in this vacancy, and authorise use of the application and supporting documentation that you have previously lodged.

If you applied to the National Board's call for expressions of interest in May 2013, your application is still under consideration and you will be notified in due course about the outcome of the process.

Expressions of interest close by **5.00pm AEDT on Monday 18 November 2013**.

Interim guidelines for 4+2 internship programs released

The Board has released interim guidelines for 4+2 internship programs. The interim guidelines implement some key changes to the program in response to stakeholder feedback.

The changes correct inconsistencies, improve clarity, and incorporate changes that have occurred since the guidelines were first released in 2010. Amendments include the introduction of the National Psychology Exam and mandatory supervisor training. They also include changes suggested by stakeholders, such as the new requirement for case studies to be submitted to the Board and assessed during the second half of the internship instead of at the end.

The interim *Guidelines for 4+2 internship programs for provisional psychologists and supervisors* have been published on the Board's website and are effective from 1 October 2013. You can access the guidelines on the 4+2 internship program page under [Codes, guidelines and policies](#).

The Board has also made some improvements to the reporting and recording forms, released new versions of the progress report form and final assessment of competence form, and provided some new supplementary forms for provisional psychologists and supervisors. These are available under [Forms](#).

The Board continues with its plan for a full review of the guidelines, about which it will be consulting in due course.

National Psychology Exam update

The development of the *Guidelines for the National Psychology Examination* and the introduction of the new National Psychology Exam has been a priority project for the Board in 2013. The examination ensures a consistent professional standard of psychologists nationally.

Guidelines

The Board has approved new *Guidelines for the National Psychology Examination*. The guidelines specify the examination eligibility requirements, examination rules and specific exam policies.

The Board previously released public consultation papers on the development of the examination in April 2011 (Consultation Paper 9 – National Examination Consultation Paper), and April 2013 (Consultation Paper 18 – Guidelines for the National Psychology Examination). Feedback received from these consultations was taken into account when approving the final guidelines.

You can access the guidelines under [Codes, guidelines and policies](#) on the Board's website.

About the examination

Tips for candidates

You must be familiar with the examination curriculum, which is published on the Board's website. The 2012 edition of the curriculum was approved by the Board in March 2012 and is in force. It is due for review in 2015.

The Board has published a recommended reading list to guide you when preparing for the examination. The reading list is recommended but not mandatory.

The examination is in multiple-choice format, with 150 questions to be taken over 3.5 hours.

If you fail the examination, you must wait three months before re-sitting.

The onus is on you to schedule the examination and present yourself at the required time and examination centre.

Examination cost

The cost to sit the examination is \$450. This fee is far lower than many professional examinations and has been set low to assist those from regional areas who need to travel to sit the exam.

Location of testing centres

Examinations will be held in testing centres in each state or territory throughout Australia.

When you pay and book for your examination via the [examination portal](#), you can choose the testing centre at which you would like to sit the examination.

Exam schedule

- Friday 6 December 2013
- Friday 22 August 2014
- Friday 21 February 2014
- Friday 12 Dec 2014
- Friday 23 May 2014

Who needs to sit the National Psychology Examination, and when?

Applicant	When you need to sit the exam	Date from which you need to sit and pass the exam to be registered
Provisional psychologist in 4+2 internship	During 6th year (after 1,540 hours of supervised practice internship)	1 July 2014
Provisional psychologist in 5+1 internship	During 6th year (within approved supervised practice internship)	1 July 2014
Person returning to psychology practice after 10 years	As directed by Psychology Board of Australia in response to application	1 July 2014
Provisional psychologist in Masters/ DPsyc/PhD	During 6th year (within accredited training program)	1 July 2016*
Person with overseas qualifications in psychology who meets other requirements	During approved supervised practice internship (usually this is a 3-month program)	1 July 2013
Person required to do so by board or panel or tribunal	As directed by authority	As directed by authority

*Currently exempt until 30 June 2016. The Board will review this exemption before 2016.

Further information

More information is available on the Board's website under [Registration>National Psychology Exam](#).

Code of ethics

In the lead-up to the start of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme) in 2010, the Psychology Board of Australia undertook public consultation on the proposed codes and guidelines for the profession, including a proposal for a code of ethics. The Board subsequently approved the Australian Psychological Society (APS) *Code of ethics* (2007) for the profession. The rationale for adopting the APS code included that it met the following requirements:

- clearly identified and defined ethical principles
- consistency with international ethical standards for psychology
- familiarity to Australian psychologists, and
- supported by Australian psychologists and stakeholders.

The Board has recently completed a public consultation that included a request for feedback on options for the code of ethics for the psychology profession.

Following this consultation the Board has determined that the APS *Code of ethics* is the most relevant and suitable code for the psychology profession, and agreed to continue to approve this code as the overarching code of ethics, conduct and practice for registered psychologists in Australia.

The *Code of ethics* is a valuable resource, and psychologists should ensure they refer to it regularly throughout their career and always practise in accordance with the principles of the code.

The APS *Ethical guidelines*, which first appeared as an appendix to the 1986 APS *Code*, have been published as a separate document since 1997. While the *Ethical guidelines* may be a useful supplement to the code, the Board has not adopted the *Ethical guidelines* for the profession so familiarity with the guidelines remains optional, whereas familiarity with the *Code of ethics* is mandatory.

The *Code of ethics* is available to download from the APS website at no charge and can be accessed via the Psychology Board website using the link below.

Further reading:

- *Code of ethics* under [Standards and guidelines>Codes, guidelines and policies](#)
- *Consultation paper on codes and guidelines* (March 2010) and *Consultation paper on common guidelines and code of ethics* (April 2013) under [News>Past consultations](#).

REMINDER: 2013 renewal due soon

Psychologists with general and non-practising registration are reminded that their registration is due for renewal **by 30 November 2013**. Practitioners with provisional registration renew on the anniversary of their initial registration. Each year registrants are required to confirm

that they have met the Board's continuing professional development standard involving 30 hours of CPD, and other standards such as professional indemnity.

We urge you to keep your email contact details given to AHPRA up to date so you don't miss the reminders to renew. Look out for the reminders from AHPRA as online renewal is now open. Letters will be sent to practitioners who have not supplied an email address.

Make sure you renew your registration on time. The quickest and easiest way to do this is [online](#).

Renewal applications received by AHPRA **after** 30 November will incur an additional late fee. If you do not apply to renew within one month of your registration expiry date, the 'late renewal period' permitted under the National Law, your registration will lapse. Your name will be removed from the national register. This means you must make a new application for registration and will **not be able to practise** until your application has been finalised.

Psychologists who do not want to renew their registration to keep practising can simply ignore the reminders from AHPRA or go online to 'opt out' of renewing. Using the 'opt out' service puts a stop to renewal reminders.

FAQ about renewal are available on the [Board website](#) under *Registration renewal*.

Online graduate applications for provisional registration now open

If you have completed – or are about to complete – an accredited fourth-year psychology course you can now apply online for provisional registration as a psychologist. This online function helps smooth the path from undergraduate study to postgraduate training as a provisional psychologist.

You can apply for provisional registration as soon as you have completed all the requirements of your fourth year degree, before formally graduating (i.e. attending the graduation ceremony) if you have the arrangements for your fifth and sixth year program in place.

You are eligible to use the online service if you intend to continue your psychology training and require provisional registration to undertake the fifth and sixth years of psychology training through one of the approved pathways leading to general registration as a psychologist.

These are:

- 4+2 internship program
- 5+1 internship program, or

- higher degree program (Masters/Doctorate professional qualification).

You will need to know which one of the provisional registration pathways you will be taking at the time you apply and you must mail the details of your provisional registration pathway – a supervised practice plan or enrolment in an approved postgraduate degree – to AHPRA within 60 days of making the online application. Therefore, if you are going on to further study at university you should wait until you can provide enrolment details for a Doctorate, Masters or Graduate Diploma of Professional Psychology, which may not be until early 2014.

If you already have your placement/s and supervisor/s for a 4+2 internship confirmed and are keen to get started you can apply right away. If you are feeling confident you can even apply while still waiting for your final results – just as long as your university or college provides AHPRA with confirmation of your eligibility to graduate within the 60 days. You can also use the 60 days to meet with your supervisor and finalise your supervised practice plan.

To become a registered provisional psychologist, eligible students must also meet the National Board's registration requirements relating to criminal history, English language skills and professional indemnity insurance. Make sure you visit the Board's website and check the requirements for provisional registration before you apply.

For more information

- Go to the *Graduate Applications* webpage at www.ahpra.gov.au/Registration/Graduate-Applications.aspx for FAQ and links to more information about how to use the graduate online service.
- Go to the *Provisional Registration* webpage at: www.psychologyboard.gov.au/Registration/Provisional.aspx.
- For registration enquiries: 1300 419 495 (within Australia) +61 3 8708 9001 (overseas callers) or lodge an [online enquiry](#).
- For media enquiries: (03) 8708 9200.

Reminder: transition provisions for WA specialist title have ended

West Australian psychologists who have been permitted to use the title 'specialist' during the transition period are reminded that the transition period is now over. From 18 October 2013 the exemption under the National Law that allowed you to use the title 'specialist' no longer applies.

Section 118 of the National Law specifies that any person who is not registered as a specialist health practitioner cannot use the title ‘specialist health practitioner’. Nor can you use other titles or descriptors that could be taken to mean you are a specialist health practitioner, e.g. ‘specialist counselling psychologist’ or ‘specialty child psychology services’.

There are significant penalties for breaches – up to \$30,000 for an individual and up to \$60,000 for a body corporate – so make sure all your advertising, including business cards and websites, has been updated to remove ‘specialist’.

You can still use any protected title for an area of practice endorsement that you hold such as ‘counselling psychologist’, ‘clinical psychologist’, etc.

For more information on the use of titles refer to the *Guidelines for advertising*.

Snapshot of the psychology workforce

In November 2010 the Psychology Board of Australia released the first national registration data profiling Australia’s psychology workforce, including a number of statistical breakdowns about registrants. Since then these data have been updated quarterly and reports are available on the Board’s website under [About>Statistics](#).

The Board’s latest quarterly data update shows there are 30,561 registered psychologists in Australia. This is an increase of 372 practitioners since the last data update in March 2013.

Table 1 shows registration by type by state. Of the total number, 1,268 psychologists are non-practising and 4,077 have provisional registration.

Table 2 shows area of practice endorsements by state. By far the largest number of endorsements are for clinical psychology (5,848), followed by counselling psychology (679), clinical neuropsychology (522), educational and developmental psychology (354) and organisational psychology (336).

Table 1 – Psychologists: Registration type by state and territory (June 2013)

State	General	Non-practising	Provisional	Total	% By State
ACT	660	29	104	793	2.59%
NSW	8,705	476	1,108	10,289	33.67%
NT	193	4	22	219	0.72%
QLD	4,401	222	821	5,444	17.81%
SA	1,279	71	175	1,525	4.99%
TAS	432	23	64	519	1.7%
VIC	6,668	265	1,287	8,220	26.9%
WA	2,633	122	495	3,250	10.63%
No PPP State	245	56	1	302	0.99%
Total	25,216	1,268	4,077	30,561	

Table 2 – Psychologists: by area of practice endorsement and by state or territory (June 2013)

Endorsement	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	No PPP	Total
Clinical neuropsychology	7	127		81	20	9	246	27	5	522
Clinical psychology	134	1,924	25	793	474	137	1,427	899	35	5,848
Community psychology		4		2	1		22	8	1	38
Counselling psychology	9	167	2	49	5	5	361	74	7	679
Educational and developmental psychology	5	94	1	60	14	16	116	46	2	354
Forensic psychology	3	125	6	31	8	4	56	15	2	250
Health psychology	2	31	1	14	8	2	75	2		135
Organisational psychology	14	104	1	62	36		89	30		336
Sport and exercise psychology	3	15		20	4		14	6	1	63
Total	177	2,591	36	1,112	0	173	2,406	1,107	53	8,225

National Scheme news

Community Reference Group update

AHPRA and the National Boards have recently established a Community Reference Group, which had its first meeting in June 2013. This is the first time a national group of this kind, with a focus on health practitioner regulation, has been established in Australia.

The group has a number of roles, including providing feedback, information and advice on strategies for building better knowledge in the community about health practitioner regulation, but also advising National Boards and AHPRA on how to better understand, and, most importantly, meet, community needs.

Members are listed on the [Community Reference Group Members page](#) and communiqués from the group's meetings are published on the [Communiqués page](#) after each of its meetings.

Professions Reference Group update

The Professions Reference Group was set up in 2012. It is made up of representatives of the professional associations for the professions included in the National Scheme, including psychology, with participation from AHPRA's CEO and senior staff. Quarterly meetings provide an opportunity for AHPRA to brief the professions about its work and for the professions to ask questions about emerging issues relevant to regulation. The group also provides expert advice to AHPRA in developing a range of information for practitioners, such as the recently published [notifications guide and fact sheets](#).

By working with the group, AHPRA has also been able to establish a practitioner consultative group, made up of individual practitioners nominated by their professional association who are willing to provide feedback on proposals and systems improvements, to inform change and improve services ahead of large-scale implementation.

Regulator logos on practitioner websites

Since implementation of the National Scheme, some practitioners have sought permission to reproduce AHPRA's logo or their profession's National Board logo on their business website.

AHPRA and the National Boards have a strict logo use policy and rarely grant permission for their logos to be used by third parties.

The roles of AHPRA and the National Boards in the National Scheme make it inappropriate for either party to endorse, or be perceived to be endorsing, individuals and organisations; their products or services.

Practitioners who have reproduced the AHPRA or a National Board logo on their business website should remove it and consider publishing a text link to www.ahpra.gov.au, advising that their registration to

practise can be confirmed by checking the national register of practitioners.

Health practitioner audit

AHPRA and the National Boards are developing a nationally consistent approach to auditing health practitioners' compliance with mandatory registration standards. Pilot audits have been conducted which were designed to determine the frequency, size and type of audits required and establish our ongoing audit methodology.

Each time a practitioner applies to renew their registration; they must make a declaration that they have met the registration standards for their profession. Practitioner audits are an important part of the way that National Boards and AHPRA can better protect the public by regularly checking these declarations made by a random sample of practitioners. They help to make sure that practitioners are meeting the standards they are required to meet and provide important assurance to the community and the Boards.

Auditing of all professions has begun. If you are selected for audit you will be notified in writing and requested to provide evidence that you meet the requirements of the standard.

Further information will available shortly on the website.

Future of accreditation for psychology

The Australian Psychological Society and Psychology Board of Australia have released a joint statement on the future of accreditation. To view the statement, visit the Board's [News>Media releases](#) page.

Contact the Board

- Visit our website at www.psychologyboard.gov.au for information on the National Scheme and for the mandatory registration standards, codes, guidelines, policies and fact sheets.
- Lodge an enquiry form via the website by following the [Enquiries](#) link on the bottom of every page.
- For registration enquiries call 1300 419 495 (from within Australia) or +61 3 8708 9001 (for overseas callers).
- Address mail correspondence to: Prof. Brin Grenyer, Chair, Psychology Board of Australia, GPO Box 9958, Melbourne VIC 3001.