

29/02/2016

**Psychology Board of Australia**

GPO Box 9958

Melbourne, VIC 3001

[psychconsultation@ahpra.gov.au](mailto:psychconsultation@ahpra.gov.au)

**Re: Public consultation paper 26: Area of practice endorsements**

Dear Board members,

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the definition of counselling psychology and to give my support for the revised competency standards provided to you by the Association of Counselling Psychologists and the APS College of Counselling Psychologists.

It is my opinion that the updated description and list of competency statements (attached) more accurately reflects the nature of counselling psychologists training, research and practice in this specialised domain.

As a counselling psychologist employed in a forensic setting for more than a decade I can confidently state that the men and women I assess and engage therapeutically are those with complex, severe and chronic mental health problems. I have contact with clients in both custody and community settings and these individuals present with psychiatric and co-morbid drug and alcohol problems, complex trauma, personality disorders and diagnoses such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, PTSD and eating disorders. Recent statistics confirm the very high prevalence of mental disorder, substance use and complex needs of the Western Australian prison population<sup>1</sup>. I also prepare complex assessments of individuals including reference and consultation with treating psychiatrists and the use of a variety of formal forensic, personality, intelligence and neuropsychology psychometric measures for a variety of statutory bodies.

The inclusion of competency statements relating to mental health assessment, case-formulation and appropriate evidence based care including knowledge of psychopharmacology is a far better reflection of both the postgraduate training I received and the clinical reality of my work.

Sincerely,

Counselling Psychologist

BPsych, MPsych (Counselling Psychology)

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<sup>1</sup> S Davison et al (2015). *Mental health and substance use problems in Western Australian prisons. Report from the Health and Emotional Wellbeing Survey of Western Australian Reception Prisoners, 2013*. WA Department of Health, 2015.