

Submission to Senate Inquiry

Re: National Registration of Psychologists

From: Dianne Veitch, Registered Psychologist, SA

I am writing to express my concern about certain aspects of the national registration system for psychologists. In particular I am concerned about how this relates to the status of psychologists with different qualifications regarding Medicare, and Continuing Professional Development requirements as they are currently set out under requirements for national registration.

1. Tiered system for Medicare rebates

If you are going to have a tiered Medicare rebate entitlement, let it be based on specialist registration, such as has operated in WA for many years, not just on the “clinical” title. This way the higher level of rebate would be available to people who have demonstrated higher training and experience, not just an arbitrary title. I have a Masters Degree in Counselling Psychology, awarded by Curtin University. This required 6 years of full-time study. For part of the Masters program I sat in the same class as Clinical Psychology students. Yet I am entitled only to a lower status than Clinical Psychologists in providing Medicare rebates (the same as a 4-year-trained psych) because the Australian Psychological Society has presented the view that only Clinical Psychologists provide top-class psychological services. I work as a sub-contractor in a private practice, and this week I have been asked to consider taking lower pay for Medicare clients because some clients are choosing not to use our practice if they can't get a clinical psychologist, which would be cheaper than a “general” psychologist. **I am very angry about this.** Who is going to prove that I am less competent than a clinical psychologist merely because I don't carry that title? Research shows that the relationship between practitioner and client is the most significant factor in client outcomes. Counselling psychologists are trained specifically in this, yet it is not recognised in the present tiered system.

2. Continuing Professional Development

Whilst providing evidence of having participated actively in a CPD activity is not unreasonable, the requirement to write a half page per each hour of CPD is excessive and unnecessary. If I attend a 2-day workshop (as I plan to do in June) I would have to write the equivalent of an essay simply to demonstrate that I have attended and understood the content of the workshop. This treats professionals like children, and is, quite frankly, offensive. Workshops are not cheap and I select carefully which ones I expect to get value from attending. Most presenters provide simple feedback sheets; why not provide a simple feedback form online which allows practitioners to enter

- the name, date and presenter of the workshop
- the topic and

- three things they learned which were of value for each half-day.

3. **Continuing Professional Development and the APS**

Why do we have to notify both the Registration Board and the Australian Psychological Society of our CPD activities? This simply is confusing, doubles up on our time and effort, and is hard to do for non-APS members, with serious consequences if they fail to comply. Membership of the APS is a matter of **choice** and it appears that non-members are being discriminated against through lack of communication. Reporting to the APS should not be a requirement for non-members, and indeed it is hard to see any justification for this requirement.

4. **Accuracy of information on Board website**

My entry in the registration website shows that I was first registered in 2007. That is true for SA, but I was previously registered in WA in 2003. I indicated this on completing the national registration form, but it has not been reflected in the website, suggesting that I have less experience than is actually the case. Accurate entries are essential.

I had hopes that the national system of registration would bring in a fairer, simpler system of registration which would support psychologists and show respect for them as skilled professionals as well as regulating the profession. So far I have been disappointed.

Dianne Veitch
Psychologist

