

Yael Clark MAPS
Psychologist
M.Psych. (Educational and Developmental)

My submission relates to section (e): mental health workforce issues:

Relegating all Psychologists other than “Clinical” to the umbrella term, “Generalist” is grossly unfair to the public who need to know the speciality of the Psychologist they are considering seeing. A parent of a child with a Developmental Disorder such as Asperger’s or Autism needs to see a Developmental Psychologist, not a Sports Psychologist, a Counseling Psychologist or a “Clinical” Psychologist. The term “Generalist” denies them this information and guidance. This problem is not addressed by the new categories of “endorsement” as it is practically impossible for the vast majority of Psychologists to attain “endorsement” (despite our having the necessary qualifications and experience). I will elaborate on this below.

This nonsensical two-tier system, both in the current Medicare structure that rebates “Clinical Psychologists” at a higher rate than all other psychologists of equal qualifications and expertise as well as in the new addition of the categories “Endorsed” and non-endorsed, is insulting and unfair to Psychologists. Apparently it is crude for us to fight for our incomes, our status and our reputation. The discourse insists on keeping the focus of this “brawl” as the APS have called it, on consumer needs. Where is our voice for our professional wellbeing? Teachers, nurses, even politicians and ALL OTHER professions fight for better working conditions and pay; why can’t Psychologists? Such a focus is not mutually exclusive to our care for our clients. In fact, a happier workforce will mean better service and outcomes for clients. Regardless, we “generalist” (I am actually an Educational and Developmental Psychologist by virtue of having a Master’s degree in this specialty and six years experience running my own successful private practice in this area) are entitled to stand up against the betrayal by the APS and the utter incompetency of a ministerial committee that has acted on biased, subjective advice- advice that flies in the face of the evidence. I have every right to demand that my elected representatives in Parliament will protect my working conditions and I will not be bullied into silence with flimsy claims that standing up for myself somehow belittles our profession.

Recent research by Melbourne University (2009-2010, commissioned by the Dept of Health and Aging) has shown that there is no evidence for superiority of either “Clinical” or APS College members. The findings of this research confirmed my understanding that each school of psychology has a specialty, none of them more expert or more important than another. Furthermore, arbitrarily classifying all Psychologists other than “Clinical” to the umbrella term, “Generalist” is insulting to us who have a Masters degree in areas other than “Clinical Psychology” and are just as well-trained as Masters Level “Clinical” Psychologists- just in different areas. As well as a Masters I have worked exclusively in my area of specialisation for six years and obtained supervision for the entire time. The reasons I am not immediately eligible for “endorsement” is that I did not log my supervision with the APS and I obtained supervision from experts in several areas of Psychology, not just “College” members. I was on maternity leave when the bridging arrangements were made and did not apply in time. **Thus the reason I am non-endorsed has nothing to do with my competency; it is based only on bureaucratic, arbitrary whims aimed at creating an ill-deserving elite.**

Yael Clark MAPS
Psychologist
M.Psych. (Educational and Developmental)

Of course, if we pay \$12,000.00 and bear the ignominy of having our Supervisor virtually chosen for us, we can “earn” the dubious honour of being registered as “Endorsed” and then the public will know our specialty. How ridiculous, how insulting, how unfair and discriminatory. I paid \$30,000.00 to study Psychology up to Masters Level to specialise in Educational and Developmental Psychology and now I am told to pay for 80 supervision sessions (approximately \$12,000.00) so that I can use the title for which I studied. I can only be supervised by those who have been APS College members –or were eligible to be such- and thus I am restricted in who I learn from. I work part-time as I have five children. It will take me several years to log enough supervised hours for Endorsement. The requirements discriminate against me as a mother and part-time worker. I cannot afford the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) on a part-time income and the few free or inexpensive CPDs that have been made available have been in the evenings, when I –and other parents of young children- are unable to attend. I am now disheartened about my future as a Psychologist even though I know it s my Vocation, my passion, and I have helped many people.

Supervision towards Endorsement must be under an Endorsed Ed and Dev Psych. There are no such Psychs other than APS Ed and Dev College members. The APS, once again, has been privileged over all other Psychologists. I am unable to seek supervision or CPD from those whose expertise would best inform my practice as I am bound to choose only an APS/Endorsed Psychologist as a Supervisor and APS endorsed PD for Ed and Dev. In any event, there is hardly any CPD for Developmental Psychology. **It is virtually impossible for a 'generalist' psychologist to successfully apply for endorsement given the impossible to achieve requirements.**

It is incredulous that I am expected to pay \$12,000.00 and have no additional higher qualification to show for it. I had intended to undertake a Post Graduate Diploma (although I already have one) and my PhD so it is not as if I am adverse to professional development or to paying for it. Bu this new demand a) does not give me anything other than recognition of what I already am, and b) it prevents me from pursuing any further education. I will have neither time nor money. And I strongly object to having to call myself “registrar” while pursuing endorsement. This is demeaning and misleading in that it suggests I somehow have inferior qualifications and expertise/experience to those who already are endorsed simply by virtue of belonging to the APS College. APS College membership is voluntary and has never been recognized by legislation yet now it is legislated that in order to be recognized for our expertise we “should have” retrospectively been APS College members. How can I be penalised for not doing something (joining something) I was never required to do or join?

The APS has betrayed Australia’s Psychologists, advocating only in the interests of those who are members of their “College of Clinical Psychologists”. Their influence borders on compulsory unionism. The PBA has virtually endorsed this compulsory unionism and allowed persons with vested interests to somehow convince the PBA to adopt their long-standing elitism wholesale. Last week Lyn Littlefield of the APS instructed members to stop speaking out about this debacle as it is bad PR for Psychology. This is manipulative bullying. Nurses were historically underpaid and overworked because they were manipulated into

Yael Clark MAPS
Psychologist
M.Psych. (Educational and Developmental)

submission with the Florence Nightingale myth; taught that theirs is a Calling and not about money. They were taught that if they were true nurses, they should work as a labour of love. We Psychologists are now being bullied the same way by our own professional association. I refuse to be bullied this way. I studied hard. I work hard. I am a professional and have valuable expertise that benefits my community. There is no reason that I should not be entitled to pursue an income commensurate with my expertise. Which brings my argument full circle to the discriminatory practice of the two-tiered Medicare rebate system.

Are our needs as professionals so easily dismissed? Jobs are now advertised for “Clinical” Psychologists simply because the clients at the practice will obtain a higher Medicare rebate. I was considered ineligible for the position of Perinatal Psychologist because the practice wanted a “Clinical Psychologist”. My speciality is Perinatal Psychology! A Developmental Psychologist is exactly the specialist for that job. The employer admitted to me that I was ideal for the job but I couldn’t offer the same rebate so could not be considered. No wonder there are workforce shortages. No wonder we are angry and feel that we have been unrepresented by our professional organisation and our members of parliament.

(iii) Workforce shortages;

Eighty per cent of Australia’s Psychologists are being edged out of the profession, being “unendorsed”. Ten years ago I worked on the now-defunct Care Ring, a 24 hour crisis line. The vast majority of the callers stated that they could not access a Psychologist and were relegated to calling the phone service nightly. Even University students were denied long-term support at uni. Are we going back to the bad old days? Will waiting lists for “Clinical” psychologists become inaccessibly long and government funded services inundated? Through having been able to offer my clients a Medicare rebate I know that my services have been helpful to people who have not historically been able to access services.

I am angry at the APS. I am angry that my work and income needs do not count to the elected members of parliament who have bought the biased and self-interested recommendations of the APS. I paid \$30,000.00 for my education and am a Masters Level professional; how can I be virtually unemployable? What a mess our profession is in. It is a disgrace that our country places so little value on the wellbeing of the sector that supports the wellbeing of the nation.

Yael Clark, M.Psych. (Educational and Developmental)
Child and Family Psychologist

Medicare Provider No. 2882011L

ABN: 76798491784