

I would like to make a submission to the senate standing committee on finance and public Administration references committee inquiry regarding the endorsement of Psychologists within the registration and medicare systems.

I am a registered Psychologist and full member of the Australian Psychological Society. I have recently moved to [REDACTED] of Tasmania after spending ten years in Rural South Australia at [REDACTED]. I obtained my full membership of the APS after completing 5 years post registration experience and where I had to show the society that I had done something significant in the field of Psychology.

As a rural Psychologist I operated from before 8 am in the morning and often till after 8pm at night delivering psychological services to the community throughout the [REDACTED] Region. As the regions only full time Psychologist I would also double up as the after hours worker who treated clients and who transported them to the Berri Regional; Hospital in the middle of the night when they were suicidal.

I had contracts to provide psychological interventions with [REDACTED], Vietnam Veterans Counselling Service, Converge international, IPIS, IPS, Davidson Trahare CorpPsych, and several other employee assistance programs. I also coordinated on an on call basis employee assistance services throughout the country after office hours for 9 days every 9 weeks for several years. I have attended train crashes, bank holdups, deaths in the workplace and other critical incidents within south Australia and interstate. I have also been contracted by the Department of Corrective Services in the [REDACTED] to conduct reports for the court as well as providing legal reports for family court, pre sentence reports, fitness to plea reports and various reports on sex offenders in South Australia and Victoria through their Department of Community Services where I was a visiting consultant working with young people and Adults who were in the system. Other areas of operation were workers compensation clients on injury and pain management. Motor accident victim management and acquired brain injury clients for assessment and treatment.

I have presented at conferences in Melbourne at the International Forensic Mental Health Conference, Darwin at the APS national conference and again in Melbourne at the International Conference of Applied Psychology. I attend a huge number and variety of workshops and seminars which cover the depth of clients I see. This year alone I have attended a workshop with internationally renowned psychologist Steve Biddulph, as well as Forensic workshops by Dr Phill Watts on Psychological Assessments, Report writing for the court and family court seminar. I am booked into two Acceptance and commitment therapy workshops as well as an advance two day workshop on Autism Spectrum Disorders in Brisbane.

I had planned on becoming a member of the Clinical college of the APS before the rules changed but being the only full time Psychologist in the region I could not get a clinical supervisor required for the membership. So some time ago I decided to move to [REDACTED] where I can still deliver services to the rural and remote community but could not get my supervision. The new rules came in and stopped me from doing this. We initially had a deadline of January 2011 to have everything in place but that was taken away from us with absolutely no consultation with psychologists. Now most of my private business has been wiped out because I am a general unendorsed member. Service providers are targeting only endorsed professionals. University courses have been slashed because of the effects of the medicare division within Psychology which makes attending a masters course practically impossible.

I believe this is a legally unsustainable position and has unduly affected my ability to earn a living. It is anti competitive behaviour and should be reversed.

I strongly believe in a fully qualified and as such supervision and ongoing training should be the basis for endorsement. I would love to do a masters in clinical Psychology but there are not enough courses for distance learning and I would have to travel over 300 kms to go to Hobart. Even then the school leavers and honours students are taking all the places.

I am more than happy to attended a number of workshops each year on a wide variety of subject areas to keep my endorsement up. I would be delighted to do the online masters and distance masters if they had places for me. The fact is I have been locked out with practically no chance of ever being endorsed. Not because of my skills level but because this has been a very poorly thought out process. The irony is that many of the endorsed clinical college members have less qualifications and ongoing training than what I have.

As for my qualifications I have a Bachelor of Social Science degree with a double major in Psychology and Criminology from the University of Western Sydney Mc Carthur. I also have a post graduate Diploma in forensic Psychology from the same institution. I have a Post graduate Certificate in forensic Psychology in Criminal and legal contexts from Glasgow Caledonian University which is half of the UK Masters in Forensic Psychology which I was originally enrolled in but left to return to Australia.

After all this I am now relegated to a second class Psychologist along with almost 80% of Psychologists in the country. This has to be illegal. It is morally indefensible to separate an entire profession so easily. I have been a member of the APS for 9 years or so. However the majority of Psychologists in Australia are not members of the APS and were automatically locked out of endorsement purely because they did not join a voluntary organisation. This is wrong at so many levels and I would ask the committee for a full review of the system of registration and endorsement and for this to be rolled out over a period of several years. For alternatives to college memberships and masters degrees as prerequisites for endorsements. A series of three or four day workshops during the year along with ongoing professional development and supervision would be fine. I am a trained supervisor for registration of the 4 plus 2 stream of psychologists and yet I am not good enough for endorsement. All my skills, qualifications and experienced have been wiped out overnight.

I believe endorsement is important if the aim is to be a specialist in a particular area. but that is not what is happening. I consider myself as a clinical forensic psychologist due to my training, experience and on going professional development. I do several workshops and seminars every year targeting specific areas of practice. I am happy to be tested on this in a similar way that I am tested on line when I do courses. I am an affiliate member of the American Psychological Association I do numerous on line courses and training. I have an extensive Psychology library of books, audio visual and journals. These are the areas which should be the focus of endorsement and that endorsement should be fluid so that if you do not keep up you loose the endorsement. Then the onus is on the Psychologist to keep up to a level that allows for endorsement or a lesser level as a generalist and if you fall short of that you are deregistered.

The bottom line here is that there are fundamental issues in the way Psychologists are registered and endorsed in Australia. It is discriminatory and has to be addressed. The criteria used for endorsements and the time lines were unachievable for many. There is very little chance that the massive majority of Psychologists will be able to meet the criteria. I believe this is uncompetitive behaviour and should be handed over to the ACCC for investigation.

Experience should be taken into consideration as well as the levels of ongoing supervision and professional Development. I would suggest all Psychologists be made generalists and an appropriate

system be developed under consultation with representatives from all industry stakeholders to ensure fairness and equity as well as public safety is being met at the highest standard. Endorsement should be made for specialists who focus on a particular area not as a college member. There would be many Clinical Psychologists for example who would not specialise in acquired brain injury.

I hope this submission assists you.

Kind regards

*Paul Campbell*