

Jessamine Chen
Clinical Psychologist

Dear Ministers,

Re: Commonwealth Funding and Administration of Mental Health Services

I am writing to request that you consider granting specialist title for clinical psychologists. In summary:

- Clinical psychology is an INTERNATIONALLY recognised speciality of psychology in its body of SCIENTIFIC knowledge and practice.
- Along with psychiatry, clinical psychology is the only specialist training in which the entire post-graduate program is in the area of mental health. No other allied mental health professional receives as high a degree of education and training in mental health as the clinical psychologist.
- Specialist post-graduate training in clinical psychology ensures a STANDARDISED training in the assessment, diagnosis, EVIDENCE-BASED treatment, and treatment outcome evaluation of mental health disorders across the lifespan at all levels of complexity and severity.
- Specialist post-graduate training is the only way to maintain the integrity of the profession of clinical psychology by ensuring that trainees develop a broad range of psychological expertise, based on academic knowledge, research abilities, and clinical skills.
- Specialist training program upholds an emphasis on the development of a scholarly and critical approach to the scientific foundations of clinical psychology. Trainees develop and must demonstrate RESERARCH and EVALUATION skills through completion of clinically-relevant research thesis (of approximately 9,000 words). These skills are critical for clinicians to be equipped with specific skills for RECOGNISING and EVALUATING the limits to their own competence and the range of applicability of theoretical modalities.
- Trainees are encouraged to make explicit links between practical experience and the SCIENTIFIC and theoretical background to their work.
- The public is familiar with the concept of 'specialist title' as it has been used in medicine and dentistry to denote individuals with accredited post-graduate specialist training in medicine and dentistry. Currently, the public is not well informed on how to determine the level of training of a psychologist to enable them to obtain the appropriate specialist treatment to meet their needs where required. Specialist title is needed to provide clear differentiation for the public of those with accredited specialist post-graduate training. It is in the best interests of the public that they, and those who refer them to psychology services, are able to clearly distinguish clinical psychologists with post-graduate qualifications and training in the speciality.

In the best interests of the public mental health, I urge you to consider granting specialist title in clinical psychology to those with accredited specialist training in the speciality, in accordance with the current standards for endorsement established by the Psychologist Board of Australia. This will enable the public to make a clear and properly founded choice of specialist practitioner.

Yours sincerely,

Jessamine Chen

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