

Dear Ministers,

We are writing to request that you consider granting specialist title for clinical psychologists. 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. This issue has arisen in

the context of preparing submissions to the Senate Inquiry into Commonwealth Funding and Administration of Mental Health Services

<

http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/clac_ctte/comm_fund_men_hlth/ind

ex.htm> .

Clinical psychology is an internationally recognised speciality of psychology in its body of knowledge and practice. Clinical psychologists

specialise 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. 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.

The Psychology Board of Australia (PsyBA) has established the standard for endorsement of clinical psychologists as a post-graduate Masters (2

year) or Doctoral (3 year) degree in clinical psychology, plus a period

of supervised training to bring the total amount of post-graduate training to four years. The PsyBA proposed to AHMAC that specialist title be granted to specialist psychologists in 2009. In March, 2010, AHMAC granted endorsement for psychology specialities. However, the public does not understand the concept of 'endorsement'.

The public is familiar with the concept of 'specialist title' as it has

been used in medicine and dentistry for some time to denote those individuals with accredited post-graduate specialist training in medicine and dentistry. Currently, the public is unaware of 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.

Western Australia clinical psychologists, along with other specialist psychologists, held specialist title for 30 years prior to Western Australia joining the National Health Practitioners Registration Scheme

in October, 2010. At this time, specialist title was revoked under the

Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act of 2009. Specialist psychologists in Western Australia were permitted to use the title until 2013, and a notation to that effect is placed on the register for those who gained specialist title in a psychology speciality in Western Australia prior to October, 2010. Specialist psychologists in Western Australia were assured their entitlement to use specialist titles would be reviewed prior to 2013, and consideration would be given to extending this status to specialists in psychology with accredited post-graduate training nationally. It is now 18months out from the 2013 deadline when permission to use specialist titles in Western Australia will be withdrawn and no consideration has yet been given to this matter.

Furthermore, it is thought that approximately half of the clinical psychologists granted endorsement by the PsyBA in 2010 were "grandparented" into the speciality without holding the required post-graduate qualifications and training in clinical psychology. This increases the difficulty for referrers and the public in identifying those clinical psychologists with the necessary qualifications for the speciality.

In the best interests of the public, we urge you to consider, as a matter of some urgency, granting specialist title in clinical psychology to those with accredited specialist training in the speciality, in accordance with the PsyBA's current established standards for endorsement. This will enable the public to make a clear and properly founded choice of specialist practitioner.

JUDY HYDE(..)

(...)

Julie Piercy
Clinical Psychologist
Medical Psychology

(...)