

15 February 2016

Psychology Board of Australia
GPO Box 9958
Melbourne VIC 3001
psychconsultation@ahpra.gov.au

Re: Public consultation paper 26 (Area of practice endorsements)

Dear Board members,

Thank you for providing the opportunity to offer input on the definition of counselling psychology in Australia. The purpose of this letter is to give support for the revised competency statements provided to you by the *Association of Counselling Psychologists* and the *APS College of Counselling Psychologists*. I have carefully reviewed their list of revised competency statements and I believe that this revision is a more accurate reflection of the Counselling Psychology field in Australia.

I am currently a third year student in the Doctor of Philosophy (Counselling Psychology) course at Curtin University in Western Australia. Through the units I have completed so far, the practicum placements I have been on, and the research I have undertaken, I can confidently state that counselling psychologists see people with complex, severe, and chronic mental health issues.

My first practicum placement was in a residential aged care facility. In this setting alone within a six month period I saw grief and loss, complex trauma, drug and alcohol dependencies, family breakdown issues, and individuals transitioning in and out of hospital-based psychiatric care. The diagnoses I encountered included post-traumatic stress disorder, depressive and anxiety disorders, eating disorders, and personality disorders.

From the units I have completed so far and those I am yet to complete in 2016, I can attest that the Curtin University postgraduate Counselling Psychology course extensively covers individual, group, and couples/family therapy theories and interventions. I would argue that much of this training exceeds that offered in the Masters of Clinical Psychology course at Curtin where no dedicated unit to group psychotherapy or couples and family therapy exist. We share a unit with Clinical Psychology students which provides comprehensive knowledge of and experience with psychological assessment and its application to a broad variety of presenting issues.

Revising the competency statements to include elements of mental health assessment, case formulation, and evidence-based care (individual, group, and couple/family) truly reflects the accredited postgraduate training offered at Curtin University. I argue that any less training in an AHPRA registered health professional would be unethical and frankly, illegal.

Kind regards,

Provisionally Registered Psychologist and PhD Candidate (Counselling Psychology)
BPsych(Hons)