

## Fact sheet

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April 2015

### Extended leave provisions for psychologists

#### Introduction

This fact sheet has been developed by the Psychology Board of Australia (the Board) and provides information for psychologists who are taking extended leave from practice but who intend to return to psychology practice in the future.

The most common type of extended leave is parental leave including:

- maternity leave
- paternity leave
- adoption leave, and
- grandparenting leave.

This information may also be applied to other types of extended leave including:

- carer's leave which may include carer's responsibilities for a child, grandchild, parent or other person dependent on your care
- health reasons/sick leave which may include extended illness, injury, stress, or other reasons that impact your ability to work or study at the current time, such as bereavement, and
- lifestyle leave which may be taken to travel or pursue other work or interests but with the intention of returning to psychology practice in the future.

The information in this fact sheet is intended to ensure that psychologists taking extended leave are fully informed of their options and obligations, and to make the transition from the workforce to maternity or other leave, and then back again, as easy as possible.

#### Supporting the work life balance

Ensuring fair and equitable policies and processes for psychologists taking parental leave, carer's leave or lifestyle leave is important to the Board.

The Board already supports parental leave in several ways, for example:

- Up to five years absence from practice is permitted before requiring any remedial action to update skills and knowledge before returning to practice, whereas most other health professions require remedial action after three years.
- The Board charges a significantly lower [fee for non-practising registration](#) to enable psychologists to remain registered while on leave without unreasonable financial impact. Additionally, the requirements to change non-practising registration to general are much more streamlined than a full application for general registration.

## Options for registration when you take extended leave

The most common choice is to change registration type from general to non-practising for the period of leave, particularly if taking a full year or more out of the workforce. Non-practising is the registration type allowed for under section 73 of the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law as in force in each state and territory (the National Law).

Non-practising registration allows your name to remain on the [national register of practitioners](#) and you can continue to use the title 'psychologist' provided you do not practise the profession. Non-practising registration has a reduced registration fee and exemption from an application fee when returning to general registration. It also gives an automatic full exemption from the *Continuing professional development registration standard* during the period of non-practising registration.

You also have the option to maintain your general registration – either for the full duration of leave or until you next renewal is due. You can then decide whether to continue general registration, change to non-practising, or let your registration lapse.

The most suitable option for you will depend on your individual circumstances such as the length of your leave and whether your return to work date is fixed or flexible, and whether you will be doing any professional development and/or maintaining professional networks during your leave.

Some features of non-practising and general registration that may help decide the best option for you are:

### Non-practising registration

- Low registration fee.
- Automatic full exemption from continuing professional development (CPD) for the period your registration type is non-practising – no need to apply for an exemption.
- Requires an application to change your registration type to non-practising using form ANPC-76 (no application fee for current registrants).
- You cannot undertake any psychological practice at all while you hold non-practising registration.
- Your name remains on the register and you can still call yourself a 'psychologist' provided you do not practise the profession while you hold non-practising registration.
- You will continue to receive newsletters and any important notices from the Board while you hold non-practising registration.
- Endorsements and supervisor approvals are inactivated while you hold non-practising registration but can be restored when you reapply for general registration.
- Requires an application to change your registration type back to general using form AGNP-76 before you return to practice, but is more streamlined than a full application for general registration and the application fee is waived. You must lodge the application with AHPRA at least four weeks in advance of the return to practice date to ensure general registration is in place in time.

### General registration

- Standard registration fee.
- CPD requirements still apply, but you can apply to the Board for an exemption or variation to the requirements (refer to the CPD guidelines for details).
- No need to notify the Board or apply to change your registration type when you go on leave.
- You can go straight back to work at the end of your leave – no need to notify the Board or change registration type. This is an advantage if there is a possibility that you may need to return to work at short notice.
- Your name remains on the register and you will continue to receive newsletters and any important notices from the Board.
- In the event that you want to undertake some practice while on leave, you can.
- If you have an endorsement it remains active on the register and you can continue to use your area of practice title e.g. forensic psychologist. This may be an advantage if you intend to publish any research or articles, give media interviews, appear as an expert witness, or give any presentations or lectures where your area of practice title may be used while on leave from your regular job.
- If you are an approved supervisor your approval remains active which may be an advantage if you agree to act as a backup secondary supervisor or provide one-off supervision sessions in your area of expertise while on leave from your regular job.

## When renewal of registration is due while you are on leave

### If you have general registration

**Option 1:** renew – just log on to online renewals and renew your registration as usual.

- The full renewal fee for general registration applies even if you are not practising psychology.
- You will need to continue to meet the CPD standard for the next registration period while you hold general registration, but you can apply for an exemption or reduction or variation in the requirements. If you know you won't be working for all or part of the next registration period you should write to the Board to request this now.
- If you maintain general registration but don't practise psychology at all, you are exempt from holding professional indemnity insurance (PII), but should ensure that you have appropriate run-off cover for previous practice.
- If you have been on leave and not practised psychology at all for more than five years you will not meet the recency of practice requirements and will not be able to renew general registration. Your options are either to contact the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) and apply to change your registration to non-practising, or to elect not to renew and let your registration lapse. In both cases you will need to reapply for general registration when you are ready to return to practice and will need to undertake remedial action to update your skills and knowledge. Specific remedial requirements are determined case-by-case at the time you apply to return to practice – refer to the Board's *Recency of practice registration standard* and the *Policy for recency of practice requirements* for details.

**Option 2:** apply to change to non-practising registration.

- Do not pay your general registration renewal notice if you intend to change to non-practising or you will be charged the general registration fee. This is much higher than the non-practising fees, and there is no refund on renewal fees (unless the Board refuses the application because you are not eligible to renew).
- If you do renew general registration but decide afterwards that you want to change to non-practising you won't need to pay any further fees because the general registration fee you have already paid covers the non-practising fee. However, there is no refund of the difference.
- Lodge an application for non-practising registration separately – use form ANPC-76. When you lodge the form with AHPRA your renewal invoice will be cancelled and staff will create an invoice for non-practising registration instead. Disregard any renewal notices you receive in the meantime while the change is being processed.

**Option 3:** do not renew general registration – log on to online renewals and select the option '*I DO NOT WISH TO RENEW*' my registration.

- This option is generally most suitable for long-term leave – e.g. you intend to be a stay-at-home parent until your children have started school.
- Your name will be removed from the register which means you will not be permitted to use the title 'psychologist' and you will not receive communications from the Board.
- You will need to make a new application for registration when you wish to return to practice.
- If you have an area of practice endorsement it will lapse along with your general registration. If you wish to reapply for an endorsement in the future, you will need to meet the requirements of the *Area of practice endorsements registration standard*.
- It may be more cost effective to maintain non-practising registration while on leave, depending on how long your leave is for. If you maintain non-practising registration you have to pay the annual non-practising fee, but when you change back to general registration, the application fee will be waived. Whereas, if you let your registration lapse you pay no registration fees, but will need to pay the general registration application fee when you apply for general registration to return to practice. The general registration application fee equates to several years of non-practising registration fees – see the [schedule of fees](#) to compare.

### If you have non-practising registration

You will be invited to renew your non-practising registration and can just log on to online renewals to renew your registration as usual. The only difference is some variation in the questions you will be asked on the form and a lower renewal fee than general registration.

## CPD requirements when you take extended leave

### If you have non-practising registration

If you have changed your registration to non-practising you are fully exempt from CPD for the period you hold non-practising registration and complete pro-rata CPD for any period you hold general registration. For example, if you have non-practising registration for nine months of the registration year and general registration for three months, your CPD requirement for the year is 7.5 hours including 2.5 hours of peer consultation.

If, for any reason, you are unable to meet this requirement due to special circumstances you must notify the Board in advance and request permission to vary the requirements. For example, you may propose making up the hours in the next registration period. Refer to the *Policy for exemption from continuing professional development requirements* for more information.

### If you have general registration

If you maintain general registration for the duration of your leave you must continue to meet all the requirements of general registration including CPD, unless special circumstances apply, in which case you may apply to the Board for a reduction or variation in the CPD requirements under the exemption policy.

When you hold general registration and are required to undertake CPD during extended leave and during the transition back to practice, you should adapt your learning plan to your circumstances and you may find your learning and development goals are quite different during this period. Similarly, the types of activities you choose may differ. For example, if you are a new parent you may choose activities you can do at home such as reading and online modules instead of attending workshops and conferences. Your peer consultation may focus on keeping up to date with developments in your area of practice rather than case review, and also include discussing strategies for returning to practice and successfully balancing career and family.

### If you are not registered

If your registration lapses while on leave you have no CPD obligations while not registered. However, if you are going to re-register in the future you should still retain your CPD records from when you were registered for the period required by the CPD registration standard.

If you do choose to undertake CPD, peer consultation or further education while you are not registered or hold non-practising registration you are not obliged to keep a CPD log or meet any of the other requirements of the CPD standard. However, if you will be absent from practice for five years or more it may be helpful to keep a record anyway because more than five years' without practising means you will need to undertake remedial action to meet the *Recency of practice registration standard* when you return to practice in the future. If you can demonstrate that you have been keeping your knowledge up to date while not practising this will be taken into account when determining the level of remedial action required. For more detail on return to practice after five years or more, refer to the *Policy on recency of practice*.

## Recency of practice requirements when you are on extended leave

The Board's *Recency of practice registration standard* requires that psychologists must have done psychological practice while registered as a psychologist within the last five years. If you take less than five years off from practice then you will be able to meet the registration standard and no remedial action will be required by the Board. You just need to manage your own re-entry to practice, update your knowledge and skills if required and ensure your own current competence to practise in the role you are returning to practise in.

The Board's *Recency of practice registration standard* must be met every time you apply for general registration or apply to renew general registration. This requirement is the same regardless of what type of registration you hold when you make an application. Therefore, maintaining general registration doesn't mean you will automatically meet the standard because you could have been generally registered but not practising.

When you apply to renew general registration you must declare that you have practised as a registered psychologist in the last five years. The Board undertakes annual audits of renewal declarations and if you are selected for an audit you will have to provide evidence of your recent practice.

When you apply to change your non-practising registration to general registration or apply for general registration after not being registered for a period you will need to provide a signed CV using [AHPRA's standard format](#) to demonstrate your recent practice. As recency of practice relates to practice in the last five years the practice history section of the CV needs to have enough detail to show that your work within the last five years required use of skills and knowledge as a psychologist within the Board's definition of practice. If you have recent practice experience in the last five years, your positions from more than five years ago only require minimum detail to be provided in the CV (e.g. position title, employer, and dates of employment only) as do details of any overseas registration that was more than five years ago. Additionally, if your practice history shows you have the required recent practice you don't need to provide details or evidence of keeping knowledge up to date in other ways such as CPD or bridging programs.

However, if you haven't practised at all in the last five years, you will be required to undertake remedial action to be eligible for general registration. In this case a detailed CV showing practice experience from more than five years ago, and other ways you have kept your psychology skills and knowledge up to date will help the Board determine what your individual remedial requirements will be.

## Frequently asked questions

### What if my baby arrives early?

If your maternity/paternity leave starts earlier than the date you have advised to the Board you don't need to notify the Board of the change.

### What if I return to work earlier than expected?

You must make sure that you have practising registration in place and your PII is up to date before returning to practice. Practising while holding non-practising registration and/or practising without appropriate PII in place is a serious matter and may lead to disciplinary action.

If you are applying to change non-practising registration to general you should allow four weeks for the application to be finalised. If your registration has lapsed and you are making a full application for general registration you should allow six weeks. If your employer has asked you to return to work in a shorter timeframe or you have forgotten to lodge your application on time, you should lodge it immediately and then contact your employer to negotiate a later start date. You should also contact AHPRA to discuss your circumstances and registration options.

### If I change my registration type to non-practising, is my endorsement automatically reinstated when I change back to general registration?

Yes, on the form to change back to general registration you are asked if you are seeking reinstatement of an endorsement. In processing the application AHPRA will check that you did previously hold the endorsement, that the endorsement wasn't cancelled or suspended, and that you met the requirements to maintain the endorsement while you held general registration (AHPRA will check your renewal declarations and, if applicable, audit records). If everything is in order the endorsement will be reinstated when general registration is granted.

### I have an endorsement that was granted under transition provisions. If I let my registration lapse do I have to meet the current registration standard or am I still eligible under transition provisions?

The transition period ended on 30 June 2013 and all applicants for endorsement must meet the current requirements of the *Area of practice endorsements registration standard*.

### I am part-way through a registrar program and need to take extended leave. What are my options?

You are permitted to take leave from your registrar program, provided you complete the program within five years from the date you started and you log at least 176 hours of client contact per annum over the one or two year program. This equates to around 12 weeks of full-time practice in a role which is about 40 per cent client contact.

If you will not be able to meet the minimum 176 hours of client contact per year you will need to withdraw from the registrar program. However, you can apply to start the registrar program again in the future. Recognition of your previous practice in the registrar program will be considered by the Board as part of your new application for approval of the registrar program. For more information please refer to the *Guidelines for area of practice endorsements*.

### **Do I need to maintain professional indemnity insurance while I am on extended leave?**

You only need to be covered for practice if you are actually practising, so if you are not practising at all during a period you don't need to be covered for that period, regardless of whether your registration type is general or non-practising. However, you do need to ensure you still have appropriate run-off cover for your previous practice.

### **How long will it take to process my application for general registration?**

You should allow four to six weeks for your application to be processed.

### **Back to practice checklist**

- Practising registration is in place– check yourself on the National Register
- PII policy is up to date
- CPD plan completed based on pro-rata CPD requirements for the rest of the year

### **Notifying the Board**

To notify the Board of leave, apply to change your registration, apply for a CPD exemption or any other registration enquiries, contact the Board via your local office of AHPRA:

Psychology Board of Australia  
c/- AHPRA  
GPO Box 9958  
In your capital city  
(ACT 2601, NT 0801, NSW 2001, QLD 4001, SA 5001, TAS 7001, VIC 3001, WA 6001)

You can also phone AHPRA on **1300 419 495**, or send an [online enquiry](#), or drop into your [local office of AHPRA](#) in person.

### **Links to related information:**

- Psychology Board schedule of fees: [www.psychologyboard.gov.au/Registration/Fees.aspx](http://www.psychologyboard.gov.au/Registration/Fees.aspx)
- Application forms to change registration type: [www.psychologyboard.gov.au/Registration/Forms.aspx](http://www.psychologyboard.gov.au/Registration/Forms.aspx)
- The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law: [www.ahpra.gov.au/About-AHPRA/What-We-Do/Legislation.aspx](http://www.ahpra.gov.au/About-AHPRA/What-We-Do/Legislation.aspx)
- Registration standards: [www.psychologyboard.gov.au/Standards-and-Guidelines/Registration-Standards.aspx](http://www.psychologyboard.gov.au/Standards-and-Guidelines/Registration-Standards.aspx)
- Guidelines and policies: [www.psychologyboard.gov.au/Standards-and-Guidelines/Codes-Guidelines-Policies.aspx](http://www.psychologyboard.gov.au/Standards-and-Guidelines/Codes-Guidelines-Policies.aspx)
- AHPRA's standard CV format: [www.ahpra.gov.au/Registration/Registration-Process/Standard-Format-for-Curriculum-Vitae.aspx](http://www.ahpra.gov.au/Registration/Registration-Process/Standard-Format-for-Curriculum-Vitae.aspx)