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Dear AHPRA Registrar

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the ability to write to you a submission on behalf of counselling psychologists.

My own journey is one where I believe my education, with an undergraduate in Disability Studies and a Masters in Psychology (Counselling) in 2000 that set me up to be a highly competent practitioner. I have followed the principles and ethics of psychology and ensured that I had a diverse range of experiences in the field coupled with on-going professional development and supervision.

It was my trip to England in 2006 and working in a psychiatric hospital there that gave me the opportunity to practice in clinical settings here in Melbourne. I think it is a shame on Australia that England recognised my abilities and expertise from an interview process and credentials rather than here. No-one would let me into a hospital setting on completing my psychological studies even though I have a nursing and disability background. This is okay with me now as I worked from the community level with EAP and then bereavement, so I learnt a lot.

I was able to do a bridging process to be recognised as a Clinical Psychologist in 2012 and this process was humiliating for Counselling Psychologists. I had many years of experience in hospitals, medications, assessments, diagnosis, treatment planning, supervision and the full range of psychiatric conditions and yet had to pay thousands of dollars to do two units in pharmacotherapy and studies in psychopathology. These units reinforced my already current knowledge and practice for this privilege. I have worked in multidisciplinary settings all my adult life and find that this is what best practice for staff and clients is. I proudly state that I am a Counselling psychologist and know that my counselling skills are exemplary from clients and organisational feedback.

I believe that Counselling psychologists have a more client centred approach with compassion and practicality. This does not mean that they are not clinically astute or aware of what is presenting with a client, it will mean that they may take a less intrusive or clinical approach. I believe it is unfortunate that our field of psychology has been split in two with the Medicare rebates. I belong to both camps now and would always accredit my expertise from my Masters in Counselling Psychology education and then experience.

All of psychology and individual psychologists have areas of expertise. I believe Counselling psychologists are professional in a full range of psychiatric conditions and treatments. In the field of psychology there will always be more opportunities to learn and I am grateful for this.

Yours sincerely

Mary Ann Griffin
Clinical and Counselling Psychologist