



PSYCHOLOGISTS BOARD OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY NEWSLETTER APRIL 2008

BOARD MEMBERS

Ms Vidula Garde	Chair, Psychologist
Ms Beth Walker	Public Member
Ms Cindy Wall	Psychologist
Ms Cherrie Hardy	Psychologist
Ms Judith Dikstein	Public Member

BOARD SUPPORT

Ms Jill Huck	Registrar
Ms Colette Pethick	Policy/Research
Ms Sally Ozolins	A/Complaints Mgr
Ms Julie Burrows	Registrations Mgr

BOARD ADVISERS

Mr Ted Milliken and Ms Christine Martins.

If you are interested in becoming an Adviser, please contact Colette Pethick at the address on this Newsletter. Advisers assist the Board by assessing applications for supervised practice, supervision progress reports and accompanying documents to identify if they meet the Supervised Practice Policy and demonstrate appropriate progression towards entitlement to full registration as a psychologist.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome to the first Newsletter for 2008, my first as Chair of the Board.

Another exciting and challenging year is anticipated by the Board with ongoing work associated with supervised practice and progression towards the national registration and accreditation.

We have experienced a number of changes to the Board membership over the last 12 months and I would like to thank Jeannette Stott, Margaret Johnson (both psychologists) and Margaret Seccafien (public member) for their contributions to the Board during their periods of appointment. Jeannette who also served as Chair of the Board for four years has relocated to South Australia and for those who know Jeannette, I know they will agree that our loss is South Australia's gain.

A big welcome to Ms Cindy Wall, Cherrie Hardy (psychologists) and Ms Judith Dickstein (public member) who were appointed to the Board by the Minister in 2007. Ms Cindy Wall is a self-employed Clinical Psychologist, she has practised psychology for over 12 years and 7 of those years have been in the

Northern Territory. Ms Wall has a Masters in Psychology (Clinical and Health) and is currently undertaking a PhD through Monash University.

Cherrie and has over 7 experience as a psychologist. in both NSW and the NT and is currently practising within the forensic arena at Darwin Correctional Centre. She has also worked privately in remote NSW communities.

Ms Judith Dikstein is qualified as a Social Worker, Mediator, and Legal Practitioner and has recently retired from full time work and is a part time student in Visual Arts at Charles Darwin University.

The Board has continued to work towards providing guidance to the profession in the interest of ensuring maintenance of quality health care in the Northern Territory.

I strongly encourage all psychologists to develop an understanding of the *Health Practitioners Act* and familiarise themselves with the Board's policies and guidelines.

I hope this Newsletter provides assistance and guidance in your day-to-day practice as well as an understanding of the current and potential changes in regulation of psychologists in Australia. Please contact the Board if you have items of interest you would like the Board to address in Newsletters.

Best Wishes
Vidula Garde (Chair)

BOARD MEMBER VACANCY

On 24 May 2008 there will be one professional member vacancy and 24 July 2008 a public member vacancy will occur.

Board membership is a professionally rewarding and challenging experience and remuneration is available for non-government employees.

Please note the attached notice calling for Expressions of Interest. If you would like to know more about Board membership please contact either Jill Huck or Colette Pethick at the address on this Newsletter.

SCHEDULED BOARD MEETING DATES

Please note that supervision reports, applications for registration and other information that is to be considered at a Board

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meeting, must be received no less than two weeks prior to the scheduled meeting date. The Board cannot guarantee that documents received after this date will be addressed at the next scheduled meeting. Late documents will be assessed for the level of urgency. Should your matter be urgent please contact the Board as soon as possible.

Remaining meeting dates scheduled for 2008:

12 May 21 July
20 October 15 December

POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

The following policies have been changed, re-endorsed or developed in the last 12 months:

- *Statement on Sexual Relationships Between Health Practitioners and Their Patients*
- *Identification Validation Requirements*
- *Psychological services via telecommunications*
- *Psychological services via telecommunications, addendum to the Supervised Practice Policy*
- *Entitlement to Registration Policy and Application for Registration Form Review*

NATIONAL REGISTRATION & ACCREDITATION MODEL

Progress on the development and approval of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) National Registration and Accreditation model has been delayed due to the November 2007 election. The former Prime Ministers decided to undertake further consultation. Key stakeholders have continued to lobby for refinements to the draft model. The current government has confirmed a commitment to progressing this issue.

As previously advised the new arrangements will achieve national regulation and accreditation of nine professional groups. These health professions are as follows:

Medical Practitioners; Chiropractors; Dental (Dentists, Dental Specialists, Dental Hygienists, Dental Therapists, Prosthetists); Nurses & Midwives; Optometrists; Osteopaths; Pharmacists; Physiotherapists, and Psychologists.

At this point in time it is projected that *Occupational Therapists, Aboriginal Health Workers and Radiographers* will continue to

be regulated under current Northern Territory legislation.

In 2007, the Chairs of the Northern Territory Regulatory Boards forwarded a number of submissions to the COAG Health Working Group and the NT Government. Regulatory authorities and various professions peak bodies have all forwarded submissions in relation to the proposed COAG model.

MANDATORY REPORTING

The role and scope of child protection activity is primarily prescribed by the principal child protection Acts in each Australian jurisdiction.

The ***Care and Protection of Children Act 2007*** was passed in the November 2007 Northern Territory Parliamentary sitting. The new Act provides a comprehensive approach that includes:

- Measures to prevent harm and exploitation of children;
- Strengthening of provisions to support families to care for their children;
- Extending the support for young person's leaving the Department of Health and Community Services, Chief Executive Officer's care;
- Provisions to move a child to a safe place;
- The introduction of screening for child related employment;
- The establishment of a Children's Commissioner, broadening the scope of regulated children services; and
- The establishment of Review Teams and a Child Death Review and Prevention Committee.

A planned staged implementation process is underway for the commencement of the different parts of the new Act, with the Children's Commissioner position currently being recruited.

For further information please refer to the government website: www.nt.gov.au/lant/hansard/hansard.shtmll

SUPERVISED PRACTICE

Thank you to all those psychologists who have continued to provide an essential service to the profession through supervision of conditional registered psychologists undertaking the Board's Supervised Practice program.

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As you are aware the Board is obligated to ensure full registration is founded on solid evidence that a conditional registrant is competent to practise as a psychologist. Your assessment of conditional registrants is paramount to providing this evidence.

A number of supervisors have commenced group supervision sessions. Supervision records most often provide evidence of a structured approach to identifying and addressing learning needs of the group. However, some supervisors have approved group supervision, when it is identifiable that the group session is more of the nature of a multidisciplinary team meeting or the content is of a generic rather than professional practice specific nature. If you would like clarification in relation to what will be approved by the Board, please make a written submission to the Board for its consideration.

The Board takes this opportunity to highlight some of the requirement of the Supervised Practice Policy, (available on the Board's website or through this office).

Supervisees must:

- notify the Board of changes to employment and/or supervision arrangements within 28 days;
- notify the Board cessation of supervision, whether temporary or permanent within 28 days.; and
- forward supervision reports to the Board within 28 days of completion of the period of supervision.

Despite modifications made last year the reporting forms have continued to cause concern to a number of conditional registrants and supervisors. The major issue appears to be in correct statistical calculations. It is recommended that supervisees maintain statistics correctly and in an ongoing manner and check calculations carefully. Each Progress Report must provide the statistics for that period and the total hours to date.

A number of conditional registrants have not been adhering to the Supervised Practice Policy, this may cause them to be in breach of the conditions of their registration; therefore the Board may review the registration status of the registrant pursuant to the *Health Practitioners Act*. If you are unable to comply

with the requirement of the policy, please contact the Board prospectively for advice.

SUPERVISOR / CONDITIONAL REGISTRANT INFORMATION SESSIONS

Each year the Board provides information sessions on Supervised Practice, for supervisors, conditional registrants and other interested psychologists. The Board has received strong feedback on the value of these sessions.

Information Sessions 2007

- **ALICE SPRINGS** – to be advised
- **DARWIN** at the address on this Newsletter.
21 July 2008 6pm to 8pm

Conditional registrants will be reminded of the information session closer to the date.

KNOW YOUR ACT

Psychologists and 10 other health profession groups are regulated under the *Health Practitioners Act* in the Northern Territory. The purpose of the Act is to ensure public protection.

Annual Practising Certificates (APC) 40(2)

A practising certificate is evidence that until the due date, or the date determined by the Board the health practitioner is authorised to practice in the Territory. **Note most APC expire 30 September each year.**

Always keep your APC in a secure place and check it for the following:

- date on which your APC expires;
- accuracy of information on your APC; and
- conditions (if applicable) listed on the APC.

Please contact the Board immediately if the details on your APC are incorrect.

Those practitioners with conditional registration must ensure they are compliant with the conditions. To do otherwise is a breach of the legislation and may lead to a review of registration pursuant to s30 of the *Health Practitioners Act*.

Practising Unlicensed

This past year has once again seen a number of psychologists practising unlicensed for various periods of time. No matter what period of time someone practises unlicensed, it is a breach of Section 101 (1)(b) of the *Health Practitioners Act* and is: a risk to clients,

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employers and practitioners. In addition it may impact on your employment status; exclude your entitlement to Medicare rebates; and may alter indemnification arrangements.

Should you find yourself practising unlicensed, it is in the best interest of your patients, yourself and your employer to rectify the situation immediately.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you hold current registration. The Board notes that a number of those practising unlicensed have abused staff at the Board's office. This is not only inappropriate and unprofessional, but may lead to a complaint against the practitioner.

S46 Notice of change of name or address

A health practitioner must, within 30 days of changing his or her name, personal address or business address, give the relevant Board notice in writing of the change and the new name or address, as the case may be.

Failing to update the Board with changes of name / address details means that you will not receive any correspondence from the Board. In effect this means you will miss the opportunity to receive the application to renew your registration; keep up with changes to policy; and receive newsletters.

S111 Unconscionable conduct

A person must not, either directly or indirectly, attempt to influence, coerce or otherwise cause a health practitioner to conduct or provide a health service that does not comply with the standards contained in the code applying to the Psychologists.

S117 Employer Notice of Misconduct or Incompetence

If a person who employs a health practitioner terminates or suspends the practitioner's employment because of alleged or actual misconduct or incompetence to practise, the person must provide a written report of the circumstances of the termination or suspension to the Board and to the practitioner.

S118 Protection from Liability

This section applies to a person who; makes a complaint; provides the Board with information; assists the Board with a preliminary investigation (including an assessment report or opinion); assists or provides information under Part 6; or assists or provides information to the Tribunal. This

person is not civilly or criminally liable for an act done by the person in good faith in taking an action referred to above.

Annual Renewal of Registration

Renewal of Registration forms are posted to registrants in August annually. Please note non-receipt of a renewal notice is not an acceptable reason for practising unlicensed. It is important to note that non-receipt of a renewal notice is most often linked to the registrant's failure to notify the Board of a change of address.

Employers are reminded to ensure they have sound processes in place to ensure all psychologists and other regulated health profession employees hold current registration, at the time of commencing employment and by the renewal date each year.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT / IMPAIRMENT STATISTICS

As at 31 December 2007 there was one matter concerning professional conduct being investigated by the Board.

REGISTRATION STATISTICS

As at **31 February 2008** there were **240** psychologists on the Register, of whom: **204** were full registrations, and **36** were conditional registrations.

This compares with the same time in 2007 when there were 198 registered Psychologists of whom 34 were conditional registrants undertaking supervised practice.

STOP PRESS!

Remember the renewal date for registration is 30 September. This year's renewal notices will be posted on or about Monday 8 August 2007.

CONTACT DETAILS

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