



School Psychologists

Report Back on Issues

PSA concerns about the PPF which were outlined in correspondence to the Department of Education on 6 November 2011 following consultation with members and a Zoom meeting on 4 November.

- Additional requirements imposed by the Department of Education when psychologists are already registered health professionals are arduous and don't sufficiently consider the standards of registration determined by AHPRA as they are having to re-demonstrate competencies accepted by the national body; they don't recognise clinical endorsement by AHPRA; and create additional layers of paperwork and administration in order to adhere to the PPF. This means the process for progression is more difficult than it needs to be and psychologists will have less time to do the job they were employed to do which is to support student mental health and wellbeing by providing specialised assessment, counselling and intervention.
- The process to recognise prior skills and experience is inadequate and the PSA requested further written advice from the Department about this process.
- As professional development requirements are required for each level of the PPF we sought a commitment from the Department that psychologists' workloads will accommodate this and that school budgets will include dedicated funding for professional development and learning.
- The PSA argued that professional learning and development must occur in working hours and not in the psychologist's own time or at their own expense.
- The PSA sought assurance from the Department that professional development requirements accord with the Psychology Board of Australia's continuing professional development standard.
- We identified that the documentation provided by the Department did not address transitional arrangements for advanced certification and sought clarification.
- The documentation stated that a panel representative will observe clinical practice with three different clients. This is in addition to the Senior Psychologist, Education observing the psychologist's practice with different clients. The PSA argued that this was excessive and expressed concerns about a potential breach of client confidentiality.
- The PSA requested clarity about which document takes priority – the PPF or transitional arrangements.
- We requested confirmation that two PDPs are not currently required for transition for psychologists who are currently employed in the Department. We also argued that there needs to be further guidance about what a successful PDP looks like.
- The PSA asked if a psychologist drops back a level (e.g. from Advanced to Proficient) will it impact on their salary i.e. is the Department proposing to decrease a psychologist's salary and what is proposed for school counsellors in this situation.



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- The PSA sought confirmation from the Department that psychologists move to Band 2 once they gain general registration/proficiency. We also sought clarity as to when a salary increase takes effect for those who are considered proficient and move to level 2.
- We argued that the PPF needed greater clarity about moving from 2.1 through to 2.4 once the psychologist is deemed as proficient.
- We expressed the strong position that the PPF needed to be clear that the Department is committed to ensuring both psychologists and counsellors work in a respectful and supportive working environment where they continue their professional growth and support the mental health and wellbeing of students.
- We advised that in future the Psychology Board of Australia may change registration requirements and develop new policies and guidelines. We sought advice about the Department's commitment to incorporating changes by the Board into the PPF and how often the PPF will be reviewed to ensure it reflects any changes in practice and policy by the Board.
- We noted that the proposed role description is somewhat short on detail and recommended that the key accountabilities needed to be re-worked so they first and foremost focus on improving student mental health. Accountabilities need to be more explicit in regard to the following:
 - liaising, consulting and working with other health professionals as required to support student mental health and wellbeing;
 - recognising that a continuum of responses will be required from early intervention through to intensive support which may include a multidisciplinary team of health professionals; and
 - providing grief counselling to the school community if a tragic event occurs and leading debriefings when critical incidents occur.
- The PSA reiterated our concerns about the fundamental inequalities that exist between school psychologists and counsellors in relation to pay and conditions, discrepancies between the minimum requirements for a psychologist and school counsellor, recognition of prior experience and the lack of access to rural incentives. We indicated that we look forward to participating in discussions about how these inequities can be addressed as part of a new Award for psychologists in the new year.