



**Psychology
Council of NSW**
Annual Report 2017-18

I am pleased to introduce this Annual Report for the Psychology Council of New South Wales for the period ending June 2018.

This is my first President's message and as well as reflecting on the work of the Council over the past year, I look forward to a rewarding and productive year ahead.

The Council is a statutory body established under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (NSW). Council members are appointed by His Excellency the Governor of NSW and the Council is comprised of eight members from all Divisions of registered Psychology practitioners, as well as community and legal members. The Council's activity continues to be focused on protecting the public through avenues that require safe practice and compliance with the Guidelines and Standards that have been established.

The Annual Report is an important document that all registered Psychologists should read as it describes the nature and number of complaints received and the potential domains of difficulties that practitioners commonly expose themselves to that could result in complaints. Council members have over the past year outlined information on changes of which practitioners need to be aware so that appropriate levels of competence and performance are maintained.

Overall there has been an increase in complaints about practitioners in the Psychology profession. One area of practice, which has been highlighted as attracting a significant percentage of complaints, is practitioners in private practice, especially where the practitioner works in a solo practice. By being aware of the risks of their type of practice, practitioners can ensure that they practise with the knowledge, skills and ethical judgement required of them to provide psychological services to their clients in a competent and ethical manner. Over the past year the Council has been looking at ways to better support practitioners in rural and remote communities who have added risks of geographical professional isolation.

I would like to thank the outgoing Council members for their dedicated hard work over many years. Thank you Professor Alex Blaszczyński (President), Associate Professor Bill Warren (Deputy President), Dr Robyn Vines (Practitioner Member) and Mrs Margo Gill (Community Member). Your contribution to the Council and the profession will always be very highly valued and regarded.

I would like to welcome the new members of the Council, Associate Professor Chris Wilcox (Deputy President), Associate Professor Maree Abbott (Practitioner Member) and Ms Joanne Jousif (Community Member).

I would also like to acknowledge the continuing contribution of the existing Council members, Mr Thomas O'Neill and Dr Liz Tong (Practitioner Members), Mr Hugh Macken (Legal Member) and Mr Robert Lorsch (Community Member) who will be invaluable in providing a bridge of experience and knowledge to the new Council members.

Part 2: Reports from Health Professional Councils

The Council looks forward to strengthening its relationship with the Psychology Board of Australia, AHPRA and ongoing co-regulatory activities with the HCCC.

Finally, I would like to thank the Health Professional Councils Authority staff past and present for their continuing support and contribution in assisting the work of the Council so ably. A special thank you to Ms Myra Nikolich, Executive Officer, and her team for her many years of support and guidance for the Council in the past. I would also like to welcome to our new Executive Officer, Ms Farina Bains, and Professional Officer, Mr Simon Milton, who have been keeping the Council business running smoothly over the past few months.



Ms Gail Purkis

President

Psychology Council of New South Wales

Regulation of Psychologists in 2017/18

SNAPSHOT



Practitioner information

11,956

psychologists registered in NSW

3.8% more than last year

32.9% of registered psychologists in Australia

254

NSW psychologists had complaints made about them

33.7% more than last year (n 64 more)

2.1% of registered psychologists in NSW



Complaints received

296

new complaints were received

32% more than last year (n 72 more)

8 complaints were mandatory notifications

22.3% of complaints were about clinical care (n 66) followed by:

- National Law offence 12.2% (n 36)
- boundary violation 9.8% (n 29)
- communications 9.8% (n 29)

37.1%

of complaints were from patient (n 110) followed by:

- relative 15.5% (n 46)
- member of the public 11.1% (n 33)



Complaints managed

112

complaints were managed directly by the Council

34.9% more than last year (n 29 more)

57

assessments and hearings were concluded

3 more than last year

17

immediate actions were considered or taken by Council

15.4% more than last year (n 4 more)

4

outcomes for closed complaints involved cancelled registration or change to non-practising

10 involved conditions on practice

6 involved counselling or interview



Practitioners monitored

29

cases were being actively monitored at year end

41.4% conduct (n 12)

24.1% performance (n 7)

34.5% health (n 10)

Emerging issues or trends

The 'Better Access to Mental Health Care' initiative has dramatically expanded the availability of evidence-based psychological services. It has also led to an exponential increase in the number of psychologists working in private practice and, for the Psychology Council, an upsurge in the number of complaints. Disturbingly, many of the complaints are in areas where psychologists should be well-versed in their ethical responsibilities.

The Council stresses the importance of psychologists proactively managing the specific ethical challenges presented by private practice. Psychologists should gain and document informed consent, clearly explaining confidentiality, privacy, the release of information and any financial arrangements.

Client records should communicate clearly what was done and why, giving clear reasons for various decisions and recommendations. When working with complex clients, timely and appropriate supervision should be sought.

Psychologists must practise within the limits of their competence, basing their services on the established knowledge of the discipline.

Psychologists should refrain from entering into multiple relationships with clients as far as possible.

Also the Council has seen an emergence of matters relating to poor practice and resulting in complaints being made where there is evidence of the psychologist being 'burnt out' and judgment being compromised.

Council Members

Eight members sit on the Psychology Council as prescribed by the National Law.

Registered Psychologist practitioner members:

- Professor Alexander Blaszczyński BA (Econ), MA, Dip Clin Psych, PhD, MAPS
- Conjoint Associate Prof William Warren BA (Hons) (Psych), MA (Philosophy), MPsy (Clin), PhD, DipLaw (LPAB)
- Mr Thomas O'Neill BA (Hons) (Psych), MPsy (Clin), FAPS
- Dr Elizabeth Tong BA (Hons) (Psych), MA, Dip Clin Psych, PhD (Med), Cert TSL (Eng), AFBPS, MACPA, MAPS
- Dr Robyn Vines BA (Hons) (Psych), MSc (ClinPsych), PhD, FAPS, FIAAP, GAICD

Legal member:

- Mr Hugh Macken BA, LLB, LLM

Community members:

- Mrs Margo Gill DMU, MApp Sc, MBA, Cert IV Training & Assessment
- Mr Robert Lorsch JP

The NSW Governor appointed Professor Alexander Blaszczyński as the President and Conjoint Associate Professor William Warren as the Deputy President of the Psychology Council.

Ms Purkis commences as President on the retirement of Professor Blaszczyński in July 2018 and Associate Professor Wilcox commences as Deputy President on the retirement of Associate Professor Warren in July 2018.

Executive Officer

Ms Farina Bains is the current Executive Officer for the Psychology Council. Ms Myra Nikolich was the previous Executive Officer during the year and her work is acknowledged with thanks and appreciation. The Executive Officer leads a team that works directly and indirectly with the Council as part of the HPCA Combined Councils Team. In addition, the Psychology Council is supported by a part-time Professional Officer who is a registered psychologist and provides clinical expertise.

All staff working both directly and indirectly with the Council are employed by the HPCA as an executive agency of the Ministry of Health. Councils cannot employ staff under the National Law.

Council Meeting Attendance

The Psychology Council met 11 times.

Table i: Member attendance at Council meetings, eligibility to attend and term of office

Member	Meetings Attended	Meetings Eligible to Attend	Date of first Appointment	Current Term of Office
Professor Alex Blaszczyński	8	11	1 July 2015	1 July 2015 to 30 June 2018
Conjoint Associate Prof William Warren	10	11	1 July 2015	1 July 2015 to 30 June 2018
Mr Thomas O'Neill	10	11	1 July 2012	1 July 2015 to 30 June 2018
Dr Lizabeth Tong	10	11	1 July 2015	1 July 2015 to 30 June 2018
Dr Robyn Vines	10	11	1 July 2015	1 July 2015 to 30 June 2018
Mr Hugh Macken	11	11	29 June 2016	29 June 2016 – 30 June 2018
Mrs Margo Gill	10	11	11 August 2010	1 July 2015 – 30 June 2018
Mr Robert Lorsch	9	11	29 June 2016	29 June 2016 – 30 June 2018

Council members are appointed for a term up to three years and may be reappointed up to a maximum of nine years.

Regulatory Committees and Panels

The National Law sets out the committees and panels that support the Council in undertaking its regulatory activities.

Regulatory committees and panels include:

- Assessment Committee
- Impaired Registrants Panels (IRP)
- Performance Review Panels (PRP)

The Council appoints regulatory committees and panels as needed.

The Council acknowledges and thanks the practitioners and lay members who assist with panels and hearings.

Council Committees

Councils may establish committees to assist with Council functions. Committee members are not necessarily Council members.

The Psychology Council appointed one committee during the year.

Complaints and Notifications Consultation

The Complaints and Notifications Committee considers new complaints in collaboration with the HCCC and recommends to Council the course of action for each matter.

This Committee meets once per month. The Council has delegated responsibility for the assessment of new complaints to the psychology professional officer employed by the HPCA to support the Council.

Overseas Travel

The Psychology Council did not incur any overseas travel costs during the year.

Remuneration

Council members received the following remuneration.

President	\$2,336 per annum
Deputy President	\$1,752 per annum
Council Members	\$1,752 per annum

Council members also receive sitting fees for conducting Council Inquiries, attending committee meetings and undertaking other regulatory activities if these are on a day other than the regular Council meeting.

Council members are reimbursed for expenses when travelling on official business at Council direction.

Panel and Tribunal members receive remuneration and reimbursement of expenses related to Council business.

Education and Research Account

The Psychology Council maintains an Education and Research account. This helps fund activities that promote better understanding of professional standards and compliance, issues that can lead to complaints and how complaints are managed. The account may also be used to fund relevant research activity including both Council specific initiatives and collaborative projects.

Education and Research account expenditure this year included \$5,111 to The University of New South Wales for a project titled 'Identifying factors associated with best practice by registered psychologists'. The final report was approved by the Council and is now hosted on the Council's website.

Financial Management

The Psychology Council's accounts performance was reported in the Financial Statement as follows.

Accounts Performance 2017/18	\$
Revenue	1,742,412
Operating expenditure	1,274,884
Gain / (loss) on disposal	(2,700)
Net result	464,828
Net cash reserves* (cash and cash equivalents minus current liabilities)	2,616,344

* Included in the cash reserves is an Education and Research bank account balance of \$76,736.

The Psychology Council's budget for the period 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019 is as follows.

Budget 2018/19	\$
Revenue	1,743,550
Operating expenditure	1,724,521
Net result	19,029

Full financial statements are presented in Part 3 of this report 'Financial Statements for NSW Health Professional Councils'.