



 **PSYCHOLOGY COUNCIL**  
of New South Wales

Annual Report 2016-17

# President's Message

It is with great pleasure that I submit the 2017 Annual Report for the Psychology Council of New South Wales (Council).

In a rapidly expanding digital world where diverse communication platforms allow multiple options for promoting and marketing psychological services, practitioners are often exposed to the risk of blurred boundaries. Where practitioners elect to advertise and/or offer other services or products that are effectively unrelated or tangentially related to their psychological work, care needs to be exercised to guarantee a clear demarcation between activities. The Council has dealt with a number of cases where psychologists have used social media networks to promote or market alternative therapies but in so doing, have failed to adequately distinguish such activities from their professional role as a psychologist. In addition, others have incorporated non-evidence based non-psychological alternative therapies in their interactions with clients. Practitioners are urged to review their social media profiles and practices to ensure compliance with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency requirements and to minimise risk of blurred boundaries.

Other media related issues have emerged with the popularity of reality television shows. Psychologists can play an important and integral part in promoting the profession through media programs that educate and inform the public on the role and function of psychologists. However, concerns have been expressed recently related to situations where the involvement of a psychologist is less for educational purposes, and more for entertainment. Again, the potential for blurred boundaries and issues of duty of care arises unless psychologists take especial care in defining the nature and purpose of their involvement in media shows, and subsequently ensuring that potential roles as psychologist and entertainer are not mixed or confused. Psychologists appearing in media must keep in mind the fact that they are representing the profession and its reputational standing to the public.

The year also brought some changes to the membership of the Council. The Council is pleased to announce the appointment of Hugh Macken (legal member) and Robert Lorsch (community member), both already making a significant and much valued contribution.

It is also opportune to reiterate the fact that the Council's capacity to discharge its duties in an effective and efficient manner relies in large part on the assistance provided behind the scenes by the Health Professional Councils Authority (HPCA) and the dedicated staff assigned to this Council. Accordingly, on behalf of the whole Council, I would like to once again acknowledge and express appreciation of the level of secretariat support and cooperation provided over the year.

I am looking forward to another productive and rewarding year ahead as we continue working collaboratively with the Health Care Complaints Commission in a co-regulatory environment; whilst being more than ably supported by the HPCA.



**Professor Alexander Blaszczynski**  
President  
Psychology Council of New South Wales

Regulation of  
Psychologists in 2016/17

# Summary overview



**224**

**New complaints  
received during the  
year related to**

Conduct – 109  
Performance – 99  
Health – 16

16 complaints were mandatory  
notifications



**11,522**

**Registered Psychologists  
in NSW**

2.5% more than the previous year  
32.9% of Psychologists in Australia  
1.6% of Psychologists in NSW had  
complaints made about them –  
190 practitioners



**316**

**Complaints managed**

92 open at start of year  
224 received during the year  
13 immediate actions including reviews  
54 assessments and hearings concluded  
205 closed during the year  
111 open at year end  
27 active monitoring at year end



**205**

**Outcomes for closed complaints\***

79 discontinued  
68 no further action  
26 no jurisdiction or referred  
13 counselling  
7 withdrawn  
5 registration cancelled  
4 conditions on registration  
2 registration surrendered  
1 change to non-practising

\* A complaint may have more  
than one outcome

## **Council Communications**

The Psychology Council website is the Council's primary communications tool to engage with psychologists and the wider community. The Council's website is being redeveloped and updated and is expected to provide a modern, more interactive and user-friendly platform for the public, practitioners and other visitors.

The website redevelopment involved stakeholder and community consultation that included workshops, focus groups and user testing. The new website will include easy access to the Council's new online complaint form, with detailed information about the complaint process and will make it easier for visitors to access information about the Council, including policies and publications.

The new website is expected to be launched in August 2017.

Other mediums used by the Council to communicate information to psychologists include electronic newsletters. During the reporting period, the Council published one newsletter.

## **Council Members**

Eight members sit on the Psychology Council as prescribed by section 41E of the National Law.

Registered psychologist practitioner members:

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

Legal member:

- Mr Hugh Macken BA, LLB, LLM

Community members:

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

Professor Alexander Blaszczynski is appointed by the Governor as President of the Psychology Council.

Associate Professor William Warren is appointed by the Governor as Deputy President of the Psychology Council.

### Executive Officer

Ms Myra Nikolich is the Executive Officer for the Psychology Council. The Executive Officer leads a team of five who work directly with the Council.

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 12 times during the year.

#### Member attendance at Council meetings, eligibility to attend and length of office

Member	Meetings Attended	Meetings Eligible to Attend	Length of Office*
Professor Alexander Blaszczyński – President	10	12	1 July 2015 - 30 June 2018
Associate Professor William Warren – Deputy President	11	12	1 July 2015 - 30 June 2018
Dr Robyn Vines	10	12	1 July 2012 - 30 June 2018
Mr Thomas O'Neill	12	12	1 July 2012 - 30 June 2018
Dr Lizabeth Tong	11	12	1 July 2015 - 30 June 2018
Ms Margo Gill	11	12	11 August 2010 - 30 June 2018
Mr Robert Lorsch	9	10	29 June 2016 - 30 June 2018
Mr Hugh Macken	9	10	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

Part 8 of the National Law prescribes the committees and panels that support the Council in undertaking its regulatory activities.

Regulatory committee and panels include:

- Assessment Committee
- Impaired Registrants Panel
- Performance Review Panel

The Psychology Council appointed one Impaired Registrants Panel and one Performance Review Panel during the year.

**Impaired Registrants Panel**

The Impaired Registrants Panel (IRP) deals with matters where a registered health practitioner has a physical or mental impairment that affects, or is likely to affect their capacity to practise safely.

An IRP consists of two or three people who may or may not be Council members. At least one member must be registered in the same profession as the practitioner who is subject of the complaint and at least one panel member must be a medical practitioner. Panel members are selected from a pool of people who have undergone probity checks and are experienced in working with practitioners who have health problems.

**Performance Review Panel**

The Performance Review Panel (PRP) may review matters where unsatisfactory professional practice is indicated. The PRP examines evidence to establish whether a practitioner is performing to a standard reasonably expected of a practitioner with their level of training and experience.

A PRP consists of three people who may or may not be Council members. At least two panel members must be registered in the same profession as the practitioner who is the subject of the complaint and one member must not be a health practitioner. Panel members are required to undergo probity checks.

**Psychology Council Panels**

<b>Impaired Registrants Panel</b>		<b>Performance Review Panel</b>	
<b>Membership Non Council Members</b>	<b>Meetings Attended</b>	<b>Membership Non Council Members</b>	<b>Meetings Attended</b>
Dr Emma Collins	9	Mr David Mutton – <b>Chair</b>	1
Professor Louise Sharpe	4	Ms Carol Boland	1
Mr David Mutton	4	Ms Frances Taylor – Lay member	1
Associate Professor Christopher Willcox	3		
Ms Gail Purkis	2		
Mr Peter Walker	1		
Dr Judy Hyde	1		
Dr Michael Diamond – Medical Practitioner	10		
Dr Alison Reid – Medical Practitioner	3		
Dr Mary-Anne Friend – Medical Practitioner	2		

## Council Committees

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

The Psychology Council appointed two committees during the year.

### Complaints and Notifications Committee

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

### Finance Committee

The Finance Committee reviews and manages the Council's budget, budget projections and financial reports, and makes recommendations to the Council on any other financial matters of relevance.

### Psychology Council Committees and Membership

Complaints and Notifications Committee	Finance Committee
<b>Council Members</b>	<b>Council Members</b>
Professor Alexander Blaszczyński	Professor Alexander Blaszczyński
<b>Non Council Members</b>	Associate Professor William Warren
Ms Miriam Wyzenbeek – Professional Officer (HPCA)	Dr Robyn Vines
Ms Myra Nikolich – Executive Officer (HPCA)	Mr Robert Lorsch

## Meetings and Events

The Psychology Council was represented at the following meetings and events during the year.

### Psychology Council representation at meetings and events

Name of Meeting / Event	Attended By	Attendee Role
Meeting with National Board	Professor Alexander Blaszczyński	Participant
	Ms Myra Nikolich (HPCA)	Participant
Professional Advisory Group – Children's Court Clinic	Professor Alexander Blaszczyński	Participant

## 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 to fund activities that assist better understanding of conduct, performance and health issues amongst practitioners and students and management of these issues.

Education and Research account expenditure this year totalled \$23,190 including grants to the following:

- Corrective Services NSW for 'Developing standards of clinical supervision practice for preventing professional and personal boundary violation in the correctional setting'
- University of NSW for identifying factors associated with best practice by registered psychologists
- LSC Psychology for examination of the practice of Family Court report writing by psychologists.

### Financial Management

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

<b>Accounts Performance 2016/17</b>	<b>\$</b>
Revenue	1,474,208
Operating expenditure	1,162,052
Gain / (loss) on disposal	-
<b>Net result</b>	<b>312,156</b>
<b>Net cash reserves* (cash and cash equivalents minus current liabilities)</b>	<b>2,124,769</b>

\* Included in the cash reserves is an Education and Research bank account balance of \$80,496.

The Psychology Council's budget for the period 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018 is as follows.

<b>Budget 2017/18</b>	<b>\$</b>
Revenue	1,622,739
Operating expenditure	1,953,864
<b>Net result</b>	<b>-331,125</b>

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