



**Annual
Report
2015-16**



**Psychology
Council**
of New South Wales

President's message

It is with great pleasure that I submit the 2016 Annual Report for the Psychology Council of New South Wales (Council).

The past year has been a very busy one characterised by an increase in the number of more difficult and complex cases, including those requiring immediate action. This report outlines the number of conduct, performance and health matters and shows a significant increase in matters where Council has exercised its powers under section 150 of the National Law (NSW). This year saw an increase in complaints about psychologists from 157 to 190. The number of assessments and hearings completed increased from 72 in 2014/15 to 83 in 2015/16 and the number of times Council took immediate interim action to suspend a practitioner from practising or impose conditions on their registration rose from 9 to 15.

The report details the range of complaints received by the Council. However, of note, and as highlighted in the Council's newsletter edited by Dr Robyn Vines, psychologists need to be fully aware of the nature and content of material that is placed on their professional websites, and the requirement to be compliant with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency's guidelines for advertising services. Remaining updated and aware of regulations and professional obligations is the best approach to preventing complaints being made.

The year also witnessed changes to the membership of the Council, with the resignations of Ms Tracy Flintoff, legal representative, and Dr Susan Gould, community member, due to work and personal commitments. On behalf of the Council and personally, I would like to extend my gratitude and appreciation for the substantive support and contributions made by both members. They will be sadly missed. At the time of writing, nominations for their replacement are with the Minister awaiting final approval before announcements can be made.

It is clear 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 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 and continue to be more than ably supported by the HPCA Director and his staff.



Professor Alexander Blaszczyński
President
Psychology Council of New South Wales

Regulation of Psychologists in 2015/16 Overview

11,236

**REGISTERED
PSYCHOLOGISTS IN NSW**

3.7% more than last year in NSW
33.1% of psychologists in Australia

197

**NEW COMPLAINTS
RECEIVED RELATED TO**

Conduct - 84
Performance - 94
Health - 19

177

**CLOSED COMPLAINT
OUTCOMES INCLUDED**

8 registration cancelled/disqualified
2 registration suspended
8 registration surrendered
15 conditions on registration
1 orders made but no conditions
1 reprimand issued
13 counselling
1 resolution/conciliation by HCCC
3 all or part referred to another body
42 no further action
14 no jurisdiction
62 discontinued
8 withdrawn

267

**COMPLAINTS
WERE MANAGED**

70 open at start of year
197 received during the year
177 closed during the year
90 open at end of year
39 active monitoring cases at end of year



Regulation of psychologists in NSW in 2015/16

Year in summary

As at 30 June 2016 NSW had 11,236 registered psychologists representing 33.1% of the 33,907 psychologists registered to practise in Australia. There was an increase of 3.7% on the 10,840 psychologists registered in NSW last year.

During the year the Psychology Council of NSW managed 267 complaints including:

- 70 open matters at the start of the year
- 197 new complaints received during the year.

By year end 177 complaints had been closed and 90 matters remained open.

The 197 new complaints received this year were about 168 practitioners representing 1.5% of NSW registered psychologists. There were 40 more complaints received this year compared with the 157 complaints received in 2014/15 representing a 25.5% increase.

This year there were 42 mandatory notifications about 31 psychologists. Mandatory notifications made up 21.3% of complaints received about NSW registered psychologists this year.

Complaints were received from the following sources.

Source of Complaint	Number	% of total
AHPRA	9	4.5%
Anonymous	3	1.5%
Council	3	1.5%
Education provider	2	1.0%
Employee	7	3.5%
Employers	10	5.0%
Government department	1	0.5%
Lawyer	2	1.0%
Members of the public	24	12.0%
Other health practitioners	18	9.0%
Patients	56	29.5%
Pharmaceutical services	1	0.5%
Police	1	0.5%
Relatives of patient or practitioner	34	17.0%
Self reports	4	2.0%
Treating practitioners	22	11.0%
TOTAL	197	100%

Complaints received about NSW psychologists related to:

- Conduct – 84 complaints representing 42.6% of complaints received
- Performance – 94 complaints representing 47.7% of complaints received
- Health – 19 complaints representing 9.7% of complaints received.

Fifteen complaints received immediate action consideration.

After Council consultations with the HCCC, 73 of the complaints received during the year were referred for Council management, that is 37% of complaints received.

A total of 83 assessments and hearings were concluded during the year including:

- Counselling or interviews – 30
- Health assessments – 22
- Impaired Registrant Panels – 15
- Performance assessments – 6
- Performance Review Panels – 3
- Council inquiries – 2
- Tribunal (NCAT) hearings - 5

When a complaint is closed it is possible to have more than one outcome. During the reporting period there were 178 outcomes for the 177 complaints closed as follows.

Outcome	Number
Registration cancelled or disqualified	8
Registration suspended	2
Surrender of registration accepted	8
Conditions on registration imposed	15
Orders made but no conditions	1
Reprimand issued	1
Counselling	13
Resolution or conciliation by HCCC	1
All or part referred to another body	3
No further action required	42
No jurisdiction to act	14
Discontinued	62
Withdrawn	8
TOTAL	178

At year end 39 cases were being actively monitored including 11 conduct matters, 8 performance matters and 20 health matters.

Council Membership

Section 41E of the Law prescribes that there are eight members of the Psychology Council appointed by the Governor.

Members who are registered psychology practitioners:

- Professor Alexander Blaszczyński 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 Elizabeth Tong BA (Hons) (Psych), MA, Dip Clin Psych, PhD (Med), Cert TSL (Eng), AFBPS, MACPA, MAPS.

Legal member:

- Ms Tracy Flintoff LLB, BA (to 30.5.16).

Community members:

- Ms Margo Gill DMU, MApp Sc, MBA, Cert IV Training & Assessment
- Dr Susan Gould BSc (Hons) (Botany), PhD, FAICD, GAIST (Adv) (to 31.1.16).

Attendance at Council Meetings

The Psychology Council met on 11 occasions. Attendance at the meetings was as follows.

Member	Meetings Attended	Meetings Eligible to Attend
Professor Alexander Blaszczyński	8	11
Associate Professor William Warren	10	11
Ms Margo Gill	11	11
Mr Thomas O'Neill	10	11
Dr Robyn Vines	10	11
Dr Elizabeth Tong	11	11
Ms Tracy Flintoff (to 20.5.16)	4	10
Dr Susan Gould (to 31.1.16)	4	6

Executive Officer

The Psychology Council was supported by Executive Officer, Ms Myra Nikolich, Deputy Executive Officer, Ms Maxine Kauter, part time Professional Officer, Ms Miriam Wyzenbeek and two Program Officers. All support staff are employed by the HPCA.

Committees of Council

Section 41F of the Law provides that the Council may establish committees to assist it with the exercise of its functions. Members of committees need not be Council members. The Psychology Council was supported by the Finance Committee during the reporting period, with membership as follows.

Committee	Membership	Meetings Attended
Finance	Professor Alexander Blaszczynski	4
	Associate Professor William Warren	4
	Dr Robyn Vines	4

Regulatory Committees and Panels

Part 8 of the Law prescribes the committees and panels that support the Council in undertaking its regulatory activities. They include Assessment Committees, Impaired Registrants Panels and Performance Review Panels.

The Psychology Council was supported by two of these bodies during the reporting period with membership as follows.

Regulatory Committee or Panel	Membership	Meetings Attended
Impaired Registrants Panel¹	Dr Emma Collins	20
	Dr Vida Bliokas	3
	Ms Gail Purkis	15
	Professor Trevor Waring	2
	Mr David Mutton	1
	Associate Professor Michael Kiernan	3
	Associate Professor Christopher Willcox	4
	Mr Peter Walker	2
	Dr Wendy Roberts	4
	Dr Michael Diamond MD	12
	Dr Mary-Anne Friend MD	10
	Dr Alison Reid MD	10
	Performance Review Panel	Associate Professor Michael Kiernan
Mr David Mutton		3
Ms Gail Purkis		1
Ms Frances Taylor		3

¹Includes reviews.

Meetings and Conferences

The Psychology Council continued its regular practice of meeting with the Heads of Departments and Schools and Senior Public Sector and Local Health District Psychologists to facilitate information sharing on topics of interest to all parties. The Council held this annual meeting on 10 November 2015.

The Council was also represented at the following meetings.

Name	Attendance
Council Presidents' Forum	Professor Alexander Blaszczynski

Overseas Travel

There was no overseas travel during the reporting period.

Council Communications

The Psychology Council website is the principal medium used for communicating information to psychologists and the community. The website is updated regularly and includes links to other key bodies in the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme.

The Psychology Council also regularly distributes electronic newsletters to registered psychologists with a principal place of practice in NSW. Further information is available at www.psychologycouncil.nsw.gov.au.

Remuneration

Remuneration for members of the Council is as follows.

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

In addition, Council members receive sitting fees of for the conduct of Council Inquiries or hearings under section 150 of the Law, counselling interviews and other regulatory activities if held on a day other than monthly Council meetings. Council members are reimbursed for expenses incurred when travelling on official business at Council direction.

Members of panels and tribunals also receive remuneration and reimbursement of expenses.

Financial Management

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

Accounts Performance 2015/16	\$
Revenue	1,255,652
Operating expenditure	1,214,597
Gain/(loss) on disposal	547
Net result	41,602
Net cash reserves (cash and cash equivalents minus current liabilities)	1,731,692

* Included in the net cash reserves is Education and Research bank account balance of \$106,320.

The Psychology Council's budget for the period 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017 is as follows.

Budget 2016/17	\$
Revenue	1,258,417
Operating expenditure	1,538,530
Net result	[280,113]

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