



The New Zealand Psychological Society

Te Rōpū Mātai Hinengaro o Aotearoa

18 November, 2010

Sandra Cumming
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Workforce Intelligence and Planning
Health Workforce New Zealand
Ministry of Health
PO Box 5013
Wellington 6145

Dear Sandra

Draft Self Regulation Programme

The New Zealand Psychological Society has been provided with a copy of a discussion document titled “Draft Self Regulation Programme”. The document does not have an author or source identified but we understand that it was a paper drafted by you on behalf of the Ministry of Health and that you are seeking feedback.

The Society has a number of issues which it would like considered in relation to the issues raised in the paper. These are

1. The Society cannot see the merit in providing health professions with a means to gain “formal recognition” as stated in the paper outside the current Health Practitioners Assurance Act 2003 (HPCA Act). This Act was established to protect the health and safety of the public not to give health professions “formal recognition”. The issue of “formal recognition” is very much secondary to the primary purpose of protecting the public.
2. We do not therefore support the establishment of an alternative regulatory system which appears to have the primary function of providing “formal

recognition” to a profession. This purpose appears to be more aligned with status and respectability rather than the health and safety of the public.

3. We believe that any health profession in which there is a risk of harm to the public should be regulated under the existing Act.
4. We note that in the proposed self regulation programme the profession’s title will not be protected. Protection of title is fundamental to the protection of the public by ensuring that non-registered health professionals are unable to legally claim that they have the qualifications suggested by a professional title.
5. One of the major advantages of the HPCA Act is that regulatory functions operate separately from the professional functions of professional associations. This ensures an independence which is important in providing the public with the assurance that regulation is occurring separately from professional self interest.
6. Operating two systems of regulation is likely to be very confusing for the public. We do not agree that the self regulation programme outlined will provide the public with assurance about a profession’s ability to self-regulate. Rather it will provide a confusing parallel system of regulation, one which conforms to the HPCA Act and one which does not.
7. We believe that in practical terms self-regulation for health professional groups is likely to be time consuming and costly. The costs associated with any audits required by the Ministry and inevitable litigation is likely to place a heavy administrative burden on the professional association and subsequent costs to its members.

In conclusion, the Society is in favour of the regulation of health professionals in the interest of public safety. It is very much opposed to a self regulation programme being established for the reasons outlined above. The Society would like to be involved in further consultation on this issue.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Frank O'Connor', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Frank O'Connor
President