



Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Health Practice
Chinese Medicine
Chiropractic
Dental
Medical
Medical Radiation Practice
Nursing and Midwifery
Occupational Therapy
Optometry
Osteopathy
Pharmacy
Physiotherapy
Podiatry
Psychology

Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency

7 April 2017

Ms Bree Dyson
Coroners Registrar
Coroners Court of Victoria
65 Kavanagh Street
SOUTHBANK VIC 3006

Via email: cpuresponses@coronerscourt.vic.gov.au

Investigation into the death of [REDACTED] – Court ref: COR [REDACTED]

Dear Ms Dyson

Thank you for your correspondence of 6 February 2017 regarding the Coroners Court of Victoria report on the investigation into the death of [REDACTED]

I have noted your findings in relation to this matter, and in particular the recommendation directed to the Psychology Board of Australia (the Board):

- To improve the safety of minors, the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Psychology Board) develop advice for clinical psychologists regarding the establishment of 'mature minor' status and subsequent information sharing, confidentiality and clarification of boundaries, relating to attendance and any emerging risks for adolescents.

By the way of background, the Board is assigned specific powers and functions under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law as in force in each state and territory (the National Law) which fall under five core regulatory functions:

- Professional standards– to develop or approve registration standards, a code of ethics, and guidelines for the profession that set out the minimum standards psychologists must meet for entry into the profession and on an ongoing basis
- Registration– to provide for the protection of the public by ensuring that only psychologists who are suitably trained and qualified to practice in a competent ethical manner are registered
- Notifications– to oversee the receipt, assessment and investigation of concerns or complaints about the health, performance and conduct of registered psychologists
- Compliance– monitoring and auditing to ensure psychologists comply with the professional standards requirements and other requirements such as conditions on registration
- Accreditation– working with the accreditation authority to approve accredited programs of study as suitable for registration or endorsement of registration in the profession.

The Board has approved the Australian Psychological Society (APS) Code of Ethics (Code) under section 39 of the National Law to provide guidance to the health practitioners it regulates. The Code sets specific standards to guide both psychologists and members of the public to a clear understanding and expectation of what is considered ethical professional conduct by psychologists. The Code provides specific guidance in relation to confidentiality, information sharing including with other practitioners and the associated parameters, including where clients may be at risk.

In addition, the Code references the APS Guidelines for working with young people, which provide more specific guidance on confidentiality and the use of psychological tests that might be relevant in this situation.

The Board's Guidelines on Area of Practice Endorsement also outline specific knowledge and skills required by clinical psychologists in working with young people and with different treating practitioners.

I am advised that the Board's view is that the guidance outlined above sufficiently addresses the issues raised in this matter. However, in addition to bringing attention to the issues raised in the findings, the Board proposes to publish an article in its quarterly Newsletter regarding the 'mature minor' to remind practitioners of their responsibilities in regards to information sharing, confidentiality and clarification of boundaries relating to attendance and any emerging risks for adolescents. The Newsletter is sent to all registered psychology practitioners across Australia (not limited to Victorian registrants).

The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) also publishes recommendations from Coroners at <https://www.ahpra.gov.au/News/Recommendations-from-the-Coroner.aspx>. We will publish a link to this decision on the AHPRA website also.

I hope that this response clarifies how we will address the issues identified in your report. Please contact the [REDACTED] if you wish to discuss this matter further.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

Yours sincerely



Martin Fletcher
Chief Executive Officer