NEW ZEALAND PSYCHOLOGISTS BOARD

SUBMISSION

Trans Tasman Mutual Recognition Arrangement

The New Zealand Psychologists Board welcomes this opportunity to comment on their experiences and concerns with the Trans Tasman Mutual Recognition Arrangement.

45 psychologists have registered in New Zealand under TTMR since the legislation came into being. Recently, we have noted an increase in the frequency of TTMR registrations.

The New Zealand Psychologists Board meets annually with the registration boards of the Australian jurisdictions to discuss issues of mutual interest in relation to TTMR, and these working relationships are generally positive.

While the Board supports the ability of similarly qualified and experienced people freely moving between New Zealand and the various Australian jurisdictions, we have concerns about the ability of applicants to exploit the varying registration requirements in each jurisdiction and to use TTMR to gain registration where they do not meet local statutory requirements. This exploitation highlights the significant variance in standards for registration and practice within Australia and New Zealand. We are aware that two Australian jurisdictions have less rigorous standards than New Zealand, and that applicants have taken advantage of this to achieve registration in New Zealand via TTMR.

The Australian system of state and territory rather than federal registration of psychologists means that mutual recognition is between New Zealand and the various jurisdictions. Each state and territory in Australia has mutual recognition agreements with the other states and territories of Australia. All states and territories, except Western Australia, have passed TTMR Acts. The consequence is that a psychologist can gain registration in most states and territories of Australia and in New Zealand on the basis of meeting the registration requirements of any one jurisdiction, even where they do not meet the registration requirements anywhere else.

The Board is aware of a number of applicants who would not meet registration requirements in New Zealand (without a period of supervised practice) who applied for registration in an Australian jurisdiction, successfully registered there, and on that basis then gained registration in New Zealand under TTMR. It is also important to note that the applicants *were not resident in the Australian jurisdiction in which they initially gained registration.*

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The Board is also concerned about the lack of any requirement for applicants to provide evidence of cultural competence. To illustrate our concern, it is noted that a large proportion of many psychologists' client base in New Zealand is Maori and that psychologists must have specific, well developed skills and knowledge to work safely with these clients and with their whanau.

It is the Board's experience that people seeking work as psychologists in New Zealand frequently apply for registration first, as registration is often a requirement for employment. This means that including a residence requirement prior to registration would create problems.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Instituting a requirement for applicants to live and work in the country in which they wish to practice, for twelve months or more, before applying for registration under TTMR would seem to be in keeping with the spirit of the Act.

2. It would be helpful if Boards were permitted under TTMR legislation to impose conditions on psychologists registered under that legislation, such as supervision requirements and/or training on specific issues (e.g. local jurisprudence and cultural competence).

New Zealand Psychologists Board
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