



Health and Disability Services Complaints Office

Public consultation on updated competencies for general registration

April 2023





Health and Disability Services Complaints Office

About Us

The Health and Disability Services Complaints Office (HaDSCO) is an independent Statutory Authority providing an impartial resolution service for complaints relating to health, disability and mental health services in Western Australia and the Indian Ocean Territories, covering the public, private, not-for-profit sectors and prison health services.

Our vision is to support improvements to health, disability and mental health services through complaint resolution. This is achieved through two key service areas:

Service One: Assessment, negotiated settlement, conciliation and investigation of complaints.

Service Two: Education and training in the prevention and resolution of complaints.

HaDSCO is established by the *Health and Disability Services (Complaints) Act 1995* (the HaDSC Act) and also has responsibilities under Part 6 of the *Disability Services Act 1993* and Part 19 of the *Mental Health Act 2014*. The main functions under these Acts are to:

- Deal with complaints by negotiated settlement, conciliation or investigation.
- Review and identify the causes of complaints.
- Provide advice and make recommendations for service improvement.
- Educate the community and service providers about complaint handling.
- Inquire into broader issues of health, disability and mental health care arising from complaints received.
- Work in collaboration with the community and service providers to improve health, disability and mental health services.
- Publish the work of the Office.
- Perform any other function conferred on the Director by the HaDSC Act or another written law.

In the 2021-22 financial year, HaDSCO received 431 complaints about mental health services. The most common issues identified by these complaints concerned the quality of clinical care, communication between the health provider and the consumer, access to services, and consumers rights, respect and dignity.

Feedback for the public consultation

The consultation paper “Updated competencies for general registration” is inviting feedback in relation to the adoption of updated competencies for general registration as a psychologist in Australia. HaDSCO recognises the importance of developing contemporary, fit-for-purpose competencies to ensure that services are provided by a competent and appropriately qualified workforce.

HaDSCO has reviewed the consultation paper and supports the adoption of the updated competencies for the general registration as a psychologist (option 2). Updating the competencies for the profession will ensure that services are delivered in an inclusive, responsive and patient-centred way. The emphasis on embedding cultural safety into the practice of psychologists is important for the delivery of effective mental health services, which may extend beyond Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to other culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Furthermore, the adoption of the



concept of 'threshold competencies' makes it clear what the expected minimum practice standards are for psychologists to be granted general registration.

Lastly, the adoption of the one document approach for the general registration competencies addresses the differences in the review timeframes for the different materials associated with the professional competencies for psychologists. This should allow for more timely and effective review of the competencies moving forward.

The regular review and revision of the core competencies has the potential to address some of the 'pain points' for consumers accessing mental health services in Western Australia. Of the mental health complaints managed by HaDSCO in 2021-22, the primary issues raised were related to quality of clinical care (36%), communication (21%), access to services (16%) and rights, respect and dignity (16%). A potential outcome of the updated competencies may be a reduction in complaints that raise concerns associated with the adequacy of assessment and treatment, communication between the practitioner and the patient, and an inclusive, considerate approach to service provision.

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