



Consultation on the code of conduct for psychologists

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Acknowledgement of country

In the spirit of respect, the Psychology Board of Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land and seas of Australia and their continuing connection to lands, waters and communities.

We pay our respects to the Elders past and present for they hold the memories, traditions, cultures and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Agenda



Overview of our role and functions



Our proposal on updating the code



The key features of the draft code

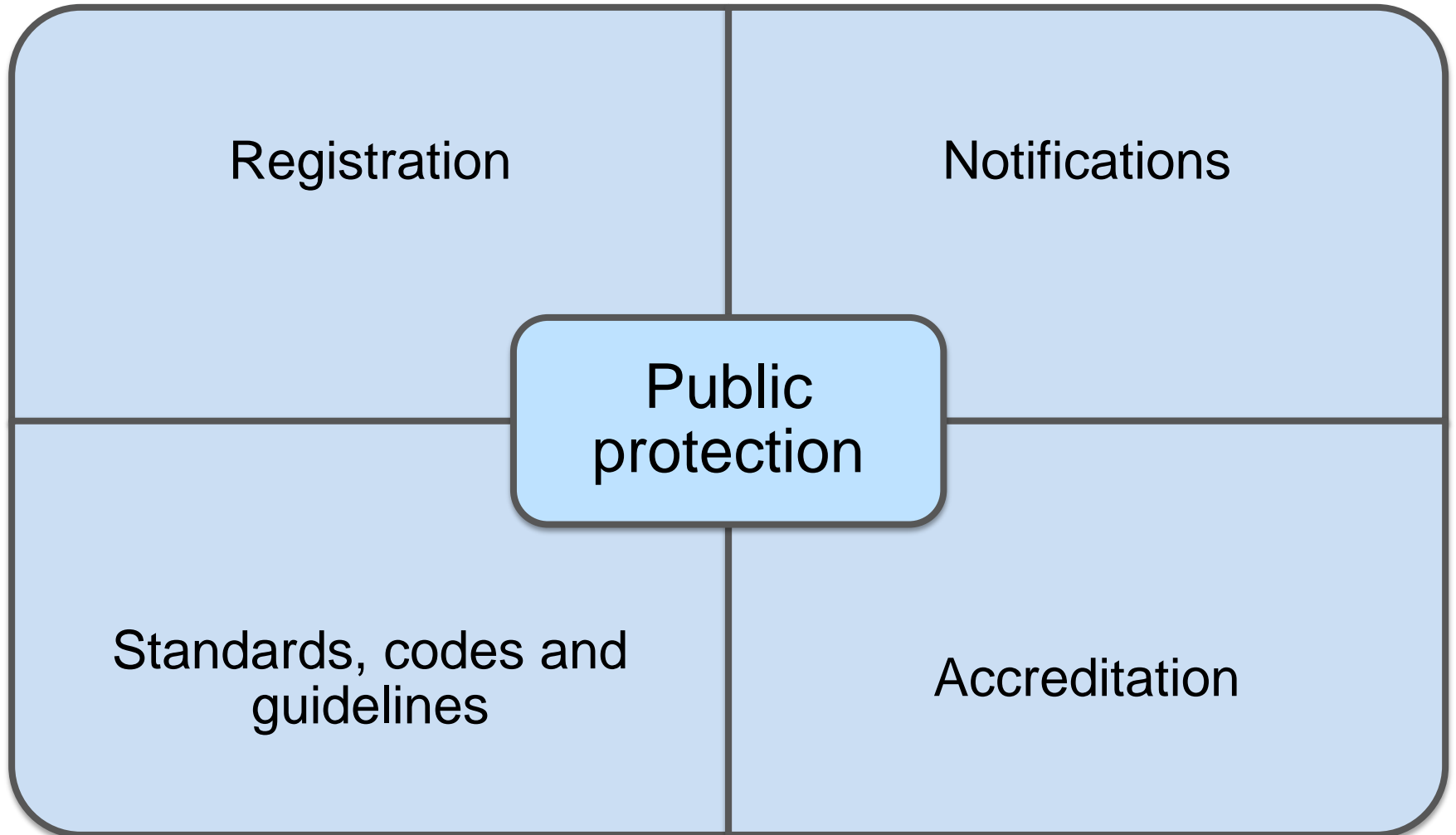


How to apply the code in practice



How to provide feedback

Our role



Context of this consultation



- All Boards may develop codes or guidelines to provide guidance to the profession they register
- The Board must undertake periodic review of standards and guidelines including wide ranging consultation
- The Guide to the Review is available to provide an overview of the consultation
- PsyBA is the only Board that does not have a Board authored Code of Conduct

Current consultations

News

Current consultations

Media releases

Ministerial Council directions and approval

Newsletters

Past consultations

Presentations



The Board carries out wide-ranging consultation on proposals that affect the profession.

The Board may also publish a discussion paper to explore and seek feedback on practice issues that could affect the profession and the public.

Where there are consultations or discussion papers open for input, they will be shown below.

Where there are consultations which have closed, they will be shown under [Past Consultations](#), along with the submissions that were received.

Public consultation – Updating the code of conduct for psychologists

The Psychology Board of Australia is consulting on updating the code of conduct that applies to all registered psychologists in Australia.

We invite feedback to the consultation from all stakeholders, including psychologists, employers, the public, education providers and professional associations.

- [Consultation paper - Code of conduct for psychologists](#) (218 KB,PDF)
- [Attachment C - Modifications to the 2022 shared Code of conduct](#) (44 KB,PDF)
- [Attachment D - Mapping table - APS code \(2007\) and draft Psychology Board of Australia code](#) (75 KB,PDF)
- [Attachment E - Draft Psychology Board of Australia code of conduct](#) (331 KB,PDF)
- [Attachment F - Submissions template](#) (53 KB,DOCX)

Released: 19 June 2023

Closes: 14 August 2023

How is a Code of Conduct used?



Provides guidance to psychologists about the minimum standards of conduct expected



Assess concerns about conduct below the standard expected and if any regulatory action is necessary



Support the public to understand appropriate conduct from psychologists

The consultation proposal

- The Board is consulting on two options
 - Option 1: to continue to endorse the APS Code of Ethics as the Board's code of conduct (status quo)

OR

- Option 2: to implement a Board authored Code of Conduct

The Board prefers Option 2

Option 2

- A regulatory code of conduct sets the minimum expected standards of practice and conduct to manage risk
- Alignment where appropriate to other professions' codes of conduct to provide consistency of expectations
- The practice of psychology is diverse and complex which cannot be reflected in a shared code

The Shared Code framework



Used by 12 other health professions in the National Scheme
Mirrored from the MBA Good Medical Practice framework



Recently reviewed in 2022



Development was informed by extensive research, international benchmarking, wide-ranging consultation and user-testing



One standalone document setting out standards



Proven to be robust and fit for regulatory purpose

Developing the PsyBA Code of Conduct



Mapping Shared Code to APS Code of Ethics



A review of notifications data, tribunal outcomes & coronial recommendations



Advice from experts to develop code that reflects the diversity of psychological practice



User-testing with regulatory decision makers

What is not changing

The proposed Code of Conduct looks different

however

User testing has demonstrated that the minimum standard for practice and conduct is not changing

Structure and access

- A single document that contains practical guidance
 - Statements about expected conduct
 - Followed by description of safe and effective practice
 - Practical guidance about expected behaviours
 - Identifies where provisions may intersect and need to be considered together
- Located on Ahpra website for public and stakeholders
- A Code will not cover every possible situation, but it does provide guidance when a Psychologist is exercising their professional judgement in decision making

The addition of Cultural Safety

- The scheme is committed to embedding cultural safety in practice expectations
- Adopting the agreed definition of cultural safety as developed by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Equity Group
- Aligned to General registration Competency Domain 7 *Demonstrates a health equity and human rights approach when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, families and communities*

Refinement of professional boundaries



- Strengthening and clarifying standards on professional boundaries
- Removal of arbitrary timeline the ‘two-year rule’ and strengthened focus on
 - The inherent power differential in a Psychologist-client relationship
 - The extent of professional relationship
 - The vulnerability of client and risk of exploitation
 - Continuing duty to client
 - All types of professional boundary violations

What does the Board expect of psychologists?



- The Board is future focussed – how do you manage current challenges and learn to mitigate future risk
- We know that the majority of psychologists' practise and conduct far exceeds the minimum standards expected
- 70% of notifications result in no further action
 - Does not reach regulatory threshold for action
 - Another entity is managing or appropriate action has been taken

What is the Board looking for?



- We will only take action where we need to manage future risk
 - the action must be proportionate and the minimum regulatory force to manage future risk
- We know psychological practice is complex, so
 - take reasonable steps to inform decision
 - consider relevant sections of the Code
 - consult with peers and supervisor/s
 - document your decision-making process

Transition

- The Board will publish the Code at least 12 months before it takes affect
 - It will take affect at the beginning of the registration year, that is 1 December 202X (TBC)
- Provides the higher education providers and the profession time to understand what changes are required

- Why are there no guidelines proposed?
 - The Code is detailed and prescriptive
 - Already user tested as suitable by other Boards
 - Some profession's colleges and professional societies also have Codes of Ethics and guidelines
- Can I still use the APS Code of Ethics or other ethics codes?
 - User testing shows good alignment
 - The Board will use the Code of Conduct in regulatory decision making
 - Ethical principles underpinning good practice will continue to be a valued resource for members

How to give feedback

Brief feedback

- Online survey includes allows free text options for written feedback

Detailed feedback

- Complete the feedback submission template and email form

What type of feedback are we seeking?



General questions



Content of draft Psychology Board code



Impact on profession, stakeholders, and community



Transition and implementation



General feedback

Thank you

