

## National Boards Patient and Consumer Health and Safety Impact Assessment

### Code of conduct for psychologists

December 2024

#### Assessment purpose

The National Boards Patient and Consumer Health and Safety Impact Assessment<sup>1</sup> explains the impact of a proposed registration standard, code or guideline on the health and safety of the public, particularly those vulnerable to harm in the community which includes those subject to stigma or discrimination in health care, and/or experiencing health disadvantage and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

The four key components considered in the Assessment are:

1. The potential impact of the registration standard, code or guideline on the health and safety of patients and consumers particularly those vulnerable to harm in the community including approaches to mitigate any potential negative or unintended effects
2. The potential impact of the registration standard, code or guideline on the health and safety of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples including approaches to mitigate any potential negative or unintended effects
3. Engagement with patients and consumers particularly those vulnerable to harm in the community about the proposal
4. Engagement with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples about the proposal.

The National Boards Patient and Consumer Health and Safety Impact Assessment aligns with the [National Scheme's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Cultural Safety Strategy 2020-2025](#), [National Scheme engagement strategy 2020-2025](#), [the National Scheme Strategy 2020-25](#) and reflects key aspects of the Ahpra [Procedures for the development of registration standards, codes, guidelines and accreditation standards](#).

Below is our assessment of the impact of the *Code of conduct for psychologists* (the Code) on the health and safety of clients and consumers, particularly those vulnerable to harm in the community and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

#### **1. How will the *Code of conduct for psychologists* impact on client and consumer health and safety, particularly those vulnerable to harm in the community? What are the actions that have been taken to address or prevent this?**

The Psychology Board of Australia (the Board) expects that the Code will have a positive impact on client and consumer health and safety, particularly those vulnerable to harm in the community. The development

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<sup>1</sup> This assessment has been developed by Ahpra and the National Boards in accordance with section 25(c) and 35(c) of the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law as in force in each state and territory (the National Law). Section 25(c) requires Ahpra to establish procedures for ensuring that the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme) operates in accordance with good regulatory practice. Section 35(c) assigns the National Boards functions to develop or approve standards, codes and guidelines for the health profession including the development of registration standards for approval by the Ministerial Council and that provide guidance to health practitioners registered in the profession. Section 40 of the National Law requires National Boards to ensure that there is wide-ranging consultation during the development of a registration standard, code, or guideline.

of the Code is informed by best-available evidence, best practice approaches for national and international regulation of psychologists, advice from experts and feedback from key stakeholders.

We decided to use the recently reviewed [shared Code of conduct](#) used by most professions in the National scheme as a base to develop our regulatory code. In our focus on the impact on client and consumer health and safety, the Board has aligned the Code with the following key aspects of the shared *Code of conduct*:

- **Inclusion of practice standards on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and cultural safety**

Standards on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and cultural safety using the agreed definition of cultural safety within the National Scheme is included in the *Code of conduct for psychologists*.

- **Cultural safety content based on advice from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Strategy Unit**

The Ahpra Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Strategy Unit provided advice on the cultural safety content. The group consists of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health sector leaders and representatives.

- **Bullying and harassment**

A review of the shared code identified bullying and harassment as an important issue that must be addressed in the workplace.

A section on bullying and harassment is included to provide clarity about professional responsibilities, the importance of addressing the issue in the workplace and the role of the Board/Ahpra.

- **Risk management and governance**

During a review of the shared code, key stakeholders, practitioner focus groups and Ahpra's operational staff identified a need for additional clarification about professional responsibilities in relation to applying principles of governance.

- **Business practices that are inconsistent with the code**

National Boards and focus groups with practitioners identified a need for guidance for practitioners who are employers about performance targets and/or business practices that are inconsistent with the code.

In line with our consultation processes, we carried out wide-ranging consultation using tailored approaches with peak community and consumer groups. Our public consultation report, which explains how we used the feedback we received, and the submissions to our consultation are published to the Board's [past consultations webpage](#).

## 2. How will this proposal impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples? What are the actions that have been taken to address or prevent this?

The Board is committed to the National Scheme's [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Cultural Safety Strategy 2020-2025](#) which focuses on achieving patient safety for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the norm.

We have carefully considered any potential impact of the *Code of conduct for psychologists* on Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples and acknowledge possible differences compared to non-indigenous people. Our engagement through consultation, particularly with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples, has helped us to better understand possible outcomes and meet our responsibilities to protect patient safety and improve healthcare quality. We have carefully considered this feedback to identify any unintended impacts (including potential negative impacts) of the *Code of conduct for psychologists*.

The expert advisory group advising the Board on the Code included eminent individual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander psychologists to provide recommendations about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and cultural safety. Aligning cultural safety provisions with the agreed definition for the National Scheme and the shared Code of conduct is expected to have a positive impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumer health and safety. The Code sets clear standards, with practical guidance on effective practice that is culturally safe and respectful. All psychologists, including Aboriginal and/or

Torres Strait Islander psychologists and non-indigenous psychologists, are required to practise in accordance with the Code.

As part of the consultation process, we have undertaken wide-ranging consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander psychology peak bodies to seek feedback on the Code and understand any required actions to address possible impacts on Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples. We will continue to partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and stakeholders to help us with culturally safe implementation of the *Code of conduct for psychologists*.

### **3. How will the impact of the Code of conduct for psychologists be actively monitored and evaluated?**

Part of the Board's work in keeping the public safe is ensuring that all standards, codes and guidelines are regularly reviewed. As a Board-authored regulatory code, the Board will ensure appropriate governance, including that the review process is consistent with the guiding principles of the National Law.

In keeping with this the Board will regularly review *Code of conduct for psychologists* to check that it is working as intended.