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Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency

## Tribunal finds former psychologist guilty of professional misconduct

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20 April 2015

The State Administrative Tribunal of Western Australia has reprimanded former psychologist Elisabeth Freeman, found she engaged in professional misconduct, and disqualified her from applying for registration as a psychologist for 18 months.

The Psychology Board of Australia had referred the matter to the tribunal on the grounds that Ms Freeman's sexual boundary violations with a client constituted professional misconduct.

The Board alleged that Ms Freeman began a sexual relationship with a client soon after she finished treating them at the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service in February 2010.

Ms Freeman's relationship with the client breached the Board-endorsed Australian Psychological Society Code of Ethics, against which the Board holds psychologists to account. The code states that psychologists should not engage in sexual activity with a former client within two years of terminating the professional relationship.

The Board argued that Ms Freeman's sexual relationship with the client was inappropriate given the professional relationship she had formed with them, and her knowledge of their personal details and mental health.

The Board also alleged that between June and July 2012, Ms Freeman had inappropriately sent text messages to the client dissuading them from making a complaint about her conduct. The client had found the messages offensive and the Board argued they were potentially damaging to the client's mental health.

Ms Freeman admitted to the conduct, and recognised that it did not meet the professional standards required of a registered psychologist. She did not apply to renew her registration when it expired in December 2012, and has remained unregistered since then. Ms Freeman voluntarily undertook further ethical training.

The tribunal found that Ms Freeman behaved in a way that constitutes professional misconduct, reprimanded her and disqualified her from reapplying for registration for 18 months.

The tribunal also ordered Ms Freeman to pay the Board's costs.

The reasons for the tribunal's decision are on the [AustLII website](#).

### For more information

- Visit the [AHPRA website](#)
- For registration enquiries: 1300 419 495 (within Australia) +61 03 9275 9009 (overseas callers)
- For media enquiries: (03) 8708 9200