

NEW ZEALAND PSYCHOLOGISTS BOARD

CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED ESTABLISHMENT OF A NON PRACTISING (REGISTER MAINTENANCE AND COMMUNICATIONS) FEE

February 2010

Purpose of this paper:

To invite stakeholder comment on a proposal to amend the Psychologists Board's fee schedule to include a non practising (Register Maintenance and Communications) fee.

Background:

The Psychologists Board has been operating as a regulatory authority under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance (**HPCA**) Act (2003) for five years. By law, a regulatory authority must generate sufficient revenue to cover its operating costs. To accomplish this, an authority is empowered by the HPCA Act to prescribe fees (s 130) and to impose a disciplinary levy (s 131). Authorities receive no funding from the government.

The Treasury recommends that fees be reviewed at least once every three years, and in 2008 the Psychologists Board's financial circumstances indicated that a review was required. That review highlighted the need for the Board to ensure that all of the fees and/or levies it charged were based on cost recovery, and that costs were properly assigned and recovered only from those persons who were responsible for them (i.e., there should be no cross subsidisation).

The Board has worked with other regulatory authorities to identify opportunities for further savings and/or new income. We noted that a number of other authorities charge a fee to recover costs associated with maintaining non practising practitioners on their Registers, thereby ensuring that the fees of practising practitioners are not subsidising these costs.

It should be noted that the Board can only remove a psychologist from the Register via:

- a competence, fitness, or complaints process (Parts 3 & 4),
- a direct request from the psychologist (s 142),
- upon their death (s 143), or
- if we are unable to contact them over a period of time (s 144).

This means that a large number of practitioners simply remain on the Register, long after retiring, moving overseas, or ceasing practice for some other reason. Maintaining these practitioners on the Register clearly has a cost, which includes (for example);

- Ongoing database maintenance/replacement.
- Routine correspondence, updates to practitioner records.
- Website facility/publication.
- Staff costs (inquiries, reporting, s 144 activities etc).
- Processing of complaints and fitness notifications (Note: all registered practitioners are subject to fitness notifications and complaints, whether or not they hold a current practising certificate).

The Psychologists Board is therefore proposing to prescribe a Register Maintenance and Communication fee, and invites your feedback.

The proposed fee:

A Register Maintenance and Communication fee, if prescribed, would recover a portion of the Board's costs in maintaining a computerised registration database, following up with practitioners to ensure that information on the database remains accurate, and making improvements and/or changes to the database. The fee would also recover the costs of providing non practising psychologists copies of the Board's publications (e.g., newsletters and Annual Report), any notices or bulletins affecting them, and (in the future) access to certain otherwise restricted features on the Board's website (a "Registrant's Only" section). The fee would be set based on detailed analysis of the costs it is meant to recover. As an estimate only, it would likely be in the range of \$50 to \$100 per annum, depending on the number and nature of services to be provided.

The most obvious benefit to prescribing a Register Maintenance (or similar) fee is a fairer system of allocating and recovering costs, and therefore closer compliance with the Office of the Auditor General's guidelines. Such a fee may also help non practising psychologists stay in touch with the profession and hence be better prepared if/when they return to practise, thereby protecting the public.

To comment:

Please send us your feedback on the above proposals/options by March 31, 2010.

Feedback can be sent to:

Email:

consultation@nzpb.org.nz

Subject line: **Fees consultation**

Mail:

Fees consultation

New Zealand Psychologists Board

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