

MEDIA RELEASE

CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY PROFESSION ASKS JOYCE TO RECONSIDER STUDENT ALLOWANCE CUTS.

The clinical psychology profession has asked Tertiary Education Minister Steven Joyce to reconsider the cessation of government-funded student allowances for postgraduate students.

The NZ College of Clinical Psychologists (NZCCP) represents over 800 clinical psychologists and clinical psychology trainees in New Zealand. The NZCCP is deeply concerned about the recent announcement that postgraduate students will no longer receive Government-funded student allowances for their postgraduate training. A recent survey of the approximately 200 student members of the NZCCP indicated that many trainees expected to be severely affected by this to the extent that many would not be able to complete their training.

The NZCCP is concerned that the proposed reduction in access to funded student allowances for postgraduate students will adversely affect New Zealand's ability to develop the clinical psychological workforce to meet our future needs in the health, justice, and social service sectors. The reasons for our concerns are as follows:

- **Extensive and Intensive Post-Graduate Training Required:** Professional training for registration as a Clinical Psychologist requires 6-8 years of university study involving completion of a Bachelor's degree (generally with Honours) and then a Masters Degree or PhD in conjunction with the Postgraduate Diploma of Clinical Psychology, or Doctorate in Clinical Psychology.
- **Compromised Ability to Meet Workforce Needs:** The proposed reduction of access to government funding for postgraduates will adversely affect the numbers of psychologists trained. Health Workforce New Zealand has specifically identified clinical psychologists as a key professional group to build workforce capacity.
- **Reduced Representativeness of the Psychological Workforce:** Due to the powerful influence of cultural and sub-cultural context in effective psychological practice, the need to have a workforce that is reflective of the population it serves may be even more important in psychological practice than in other health professions.

Clinical psychologists play a key role in many health (particularly mental health), Corrections, and social service agencies, and have specific assessment and treatment roles. The value of psychologists to the health service has been recognized by fast growth of the DHB and PHO psychologist workforce in times of otherwise limited workforce growth. Within the Department of Corrections psychologists play a significant role in reducing recidivism and they also make a significant contribution through the provision of research on reducing offending in New Zealand and to Parole Boards through the provision of risk assessments.

While the current economic situation requires careful consideration of many ways of reducing expenditure, the proposed reduction of student allowances to postgraduate students in courses such as clinical psychology will have long-term consequences and costs that will far outweigh the benefit of any short-term financial saving that is achieved. These long-term costs and consequences include an increased financial burden of disease, disability, and social dysfunction as well as the cost of lost wellbeing and quality of life due to untreated or sub-optimally treated clients.

We sincerely hope that the decision to stop provision of allowances to postgraduate students will be reversed, or at least modified to ensure that courses leading to qualifications recognized as of critical importance to the future development and wellbeing of New Zealand (such as Clinical Psychology) continue to be supported by provision of postgraduate allowances for students undertaking this study.

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