

REPORT TO NZAP AGM FOR JUNE 2022

Ethics and Professional Standards Committee

In 2021, the year was always going to be busy one for the Ethics Committee with a new Chair stepping into the role, changes to the membership of the committee, and the recommendations of Ethics Review to work through. Then on top of that, the unfolding COVID pandemic and resulting Government and Ministry of Health responses raised many ethical issues and questions for members, many of which called for input from the chair regarding the implications given the NZAP Code of Ethics.

Complaints

As a result of the recommendations from the Ethics Review report, the independent NZAP complaints process was ended on December 2021 with information regarding the change to the process being published on the NZAP website to notify the public. For all psychotherapy practitioners (both registered and unregistered), the Health and Disability Commission is now the appropriate complaints body to contact. The HDC will then liaise with PBANZ where appropriate for registered psychotherapist.

Enormous gratitude is extended to Helen Packard for her continuing work in the new role of NZAP Complaints Liaison Officer. While we may have ended our complaints process, concerned members of the public still contact us, and Helen Packard assists them to engage with the HDC. NZAP does have one remaining active complaint which was initiated before the ending of the complaints process which is now in its final stages.

Committee Membership

On the Ethics committee, we are fortunate to have the ongoing involvement of Helen Florence alongside Helen Packard as well as two new committee members, Stephanie Forde and John Savage, who are both well-versed in ethical thinking. I would like to acknowledge them all collectively for their expertise and support in my first year as incoming Chair.

The committee has completed working through the recommendations of the EPSC review with the major outcomes being the ending of the NZAP complaints process and the decision to retain the NZAP Code of Ethics, rather than deferring to the PBANZ Code of Ethics and reformulating our own into guidelines.

COVID

The ongoing COVID pandemic has impacted everyone in Aotearoa causing significant anxiety and grief about activities prevented and freedoms suspended which we had previously taken for granted. This has been doubly true for psychotherapists due to the nature of our work and the Government response, both in the form of legislation regarding vaccine mandates and the evolving Ministry of Health guidelines for safe practice. Significant differences of opinion around these issues exist within the psychotherapy community as evidenced by the passionate discussions on Connect and recent articles in our Newsletter.

Many members have had to confront our overlapping and sometimes conflicting ethical duties to our clients, our colleagues (both within our profession and other health practitioners), and to the public. Many questions from members have come my way and to Council on these complex ethical issues. I would like to thank all my fellow Council members for their support as we

collectively worked through them and made space for challenging conversations. I would also like to especially acknowledge John Farnsworth and Victoria Smith for their efforts in assisting me to digest and reflect on the Ministry policy statements and for advocating for our profession with the Ministry of Health via AHA NZ and the Mental Health and Addictions team.

Continuing Work

In terms of what comes next for the EPSC, further thinking around our shift to an educative function around ethics and professional practice is ongoing. One pilot event involved two EPSC committee members, Stephanie Forde and John Savage, zooming into an NZAP branch meeting for a group discussion on a topical question regarding ethical practice. The committee will be reviewing that style of event and considering other ways we might move forward. The chair of ethics has recently been appointed to chair a working group tasked with updating the NZAP Policy on Conversion therapy from 2004, partly in response to the recently passed Conversion Practices Prohibition legislation. Overall, it's looking to be another full year for the EPSC as 2022 unfolds.

Paul Wilson,
Chair, Ethics and Professional Standards Committee