

4 May 2026

Professor Brett Cowan
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(Email: brett.cowan@aut.ac.nz)

Dear Professor Cowan,

We write to you from the Public Issues Committee of the Association of Psychotherapists Aotearoa New Zealand (APANZ). APANZ has a membership of approximately 600 psychotherapists, the vast majority of whom are registered under the Health Practitioners Competency Assurance Act with the Psychotherapists Board of Aotearoa NZ (PBANZ).

Our purpose in writing is to communicate our appreciation of AUT's psychotherapy educational pathways and to let you know that in our opinion, AUT is making a significant contribution to the quality of psychotherapy available in Aotearoa New Zealand. We are conscious that administrators and managers of such programmes may not be fully aware of their value and importance to the field - we wish to be sure to let you know how the value of the programmes is perceived.

Briefly, psychotherapy as a discipline has a very strong basis of empirical evidence. Psychodynamic psychotherapy, as taught in the AUT programmes, demonstrates effect sizes equivalent to other therapies promoted as 'evidence based' (Shedler, 2010). Perhaps one of the most notable things about the psychotherapy endeavour is that it aims not only for ameliorating symptoms but also at producing character change. As a profession our services are in high demand, mainly from private paying client groups, but also ACC for sensitive claims work, EAP programmes, and community mental health agencies (public services and NGOs).

Additionally to AUT's programmes, psychotherapy training in Aotearoa New Zealand has been (and is currently) offered through a variety of private training establishments. These programmes offer post-qualifying specialised training in particular models of practice. AUT, however, provides the highest number of newly qualified psychotherapists who register with PBANZ into the workforce each year (approximately 70% of newly registered psychotherapists since 2012 were trained at AUT). A strength of AUT's psychotherapy programmes is that they offer a psychotherapy research component. To our knowledge this is the only research being undertaken into psychotherapy in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The Public Issues Committee notes that the AUT psychotherapy programmes are highly competitive. It is another strength that AUT offers a Graduate Diploma in Psychotherapy, uniquely offering those without existing clinical backgrounds, an opportunity to access high quality psychotherapy training.

We note the high quality of both the Graduate Diploma, Psychotherapy Studies and the Master of Psychotherapy programmes and also that academic pathways are in place via which PhD degrees are offered. This strengthens the capacity for quality education and research into psychotherapy in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Finally, the Public Issues Committee wishes to thank you for your continued support for the highly valuable psychotherapy programmes, contributing to a healthy workforce and by extension, to the mental health of the greater population.

Yours sincerely

Rick Williment
Registered Psychotherapist (PB55646)
Chair, and on behalf of the Public Issues Committee, APANZ

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