



# The New Zealand Psychological Society

*Te Rōpū Mātai Hinengaro o Aotearoa*

3 December, 2012

Hon Steven Joyce  
Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington

Dear Minister

## **The impact of cuts to student allowance on workforce development**

The New Zealand Psychological Society has a major concern which we want to draw to your attention in more detail than in our last correspondence with you. Our concerns relate to the policy cutting student allowances to students who are taking on postgraduate study. We are aware that this policy will very likely deter students who would otherwise have taken on postgraduate study in psychology from doing so. We are particularly concerned that Māori and Pacific students may disproportionately find the loss of this allowance a barrier to further study in psychology and to registering as psychologists. Professor Gorman, Chair of HWNZ has rightly voiced his concerns about the lack of Māori psychologists, particularly Māori male psychologists.

Many other health professions e.g. doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and others, complete their training partially or entirely within an undergraduate degree. Psychologists are one of a few professional groups whose training occurs *after* they have completed a non-professional undergraduate degree e.g. BA or BSc with a major in psychology. Professional registration is via a minimum of Masters plus a post-graduate diploma. The basic professional training of psychologists is therefore directly impacted by the cuts to postgraduate student allowances.

Unlike other postgraduate degrees, some components of the professional training of psychologists can usually only be undertaken as full-time study as they involve a demanding combination of practicum placements and academic work. The Doctorate in Clinical Psychology at The University of Auckland, for example, is a three year full-time postgraduate programme. This limits the opportunities for students to work to cover their costs while studying. Some students also do not get paid during their required internship of 1500 hours.

We are concerned also that this policy runs counter to the work of Health Workforce New Zealand in its mission to “heal the health system” by ensuring that there are sufficient numbers of well-trained professionals to deliver services. The policy also does not take account of what is clearly acknowledged by Immigration New Zealand, i.e. that there is a shortage of clinical and educational psychologists in New Zealand. Both these groups feature on the long-terms skill shortage list and have done so for a number of years.

We ask that that exemptions to this policy be put in place so that student allowances are restored for postgraduate psychology students for the reasons outlined in this letter. We would be pleased to discuss this issue with you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P Coleman', written in a cursive style.

Peter Coleman  
President