

Australian Psychological Society | Candidate Profile | 2026 Board of Directors Election

All candidate information is supplied by the candidate



Name: Zhi Xiang On

Candidacy: General Director, Division of Colleges, College of Clinical Psychologists

CANDIDATE CAPABILITY RESPONSES

Demonstrated interest in working across various professions for the psychological health and wellbeing of the Australian community

My interest in working across professions started with how I trained. I am a clinical psychologist, and I also hold endorsement in clinical neuropsychology, forensic, and educational and developmental psychology. Each area of practice showed me a different place where Australians come into contact with psychology, whether in health, the justice system or education. For the last four years, I have also run Back On Track Psychology, a multidisciplinary private practice, where working alongside clinicians from other disciplines is just part of my week. Over the last few years, my focus in both private practice and research, has been on culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), or culturally and racially marginalised (CARM), and LGBTQIA+ communities. I also try to take psychology into the community, through talks on psychological wellbeing for Study Melbourne and a podcast I run with Shapes and Sounds to raise awareness of CALD mental health. Supporting people in their recovery and in their lives is never done by psychologists alone. It takes other professions, community organisations and the communities themselves, and that is the part I enjoy most.

Extensive and current knowledge of, and good standing within, the APS and psychology

I joined the APS as a student member in 2016, so APS has been part of my professional life for ten years now. In that time, I have been to APS conferences, including clinical, neuropsychology, and educational and developmental psychology. Through these conferences, I have built a network of colleagues across the APS. I spend a lot of time speaking to different members and stakeholders. As a student, I also went along to AGMs for several APS groups (forensic and organisational among them), which gave me an early look at how APS is run and how decisions get made. I have also been on the presenting side, at the most recent APS College of Clinical Psychologists Conference in Hobart on Autism and Psychosis and in an APS webinar on CALD assessment. Day to day, I am a clinical psychologist running a private practice. I also hold endorsement in three further areas of practice and stay involved in research, so I see first-hand what psychologists in different settings are dealing with. I know the APS the way most members do, by turning up, and I know the profession from more than one side.

Demonstrated understanding of the role of a Non-Executive Director of a NFP company limited by guarantee

I have a good understanding of the legal duties Directors carry, such as to act honestly and in the APS's best interests, to give decisions proper care, and to keep the APS living within its means. I also understand the rules the APS works under (the *Corporations Act 2001*, the ACNC, AHPRA, the APS Constitution) and the risks a Board has to weigh up. Running a private practice, I deal with a smaller version of this every day, and I do not take it lightly. I have agreed with some APS decisions and not with others, and I am standing because I want to support positive change.

Effective leadership of membership teams or organisations that demonstrate a strong, values-based culture

For the last four years, I have run Back On Track Psychology, a multidisciplinary private practice. What has worked for me is being very clear about what the practice stands for, and then trusting people to get on with their jobs. Two things sit at the centre of our culture. The first is collaboration. I find that people from different disciplines are expected to talk to each other and share what they know, not work side by side in silence. The second is who we are there for. We have a strong focus on LGBTQIA+ clients and on CALD communities, and I want both to feel that the practice was built with them in mind. Culture, in my experience, is set by what the person in charge actually does day after day, far more than by anything written in a values statement. I would bring the same approach to the APS Board, because members will judge the culture of the APS by how its Directors behave.

Experience in, or a thorough understanding of, advocacy expectations and engagement of the community and all APS members

I have worked as both a practitioner and an academic, in public and private roles, and each seat gives a different view of what psychologists need from the APS. I am now in private practice, so I see every week what clinicians are dealing with. What members expect is that the APS understands their working lives and says so, clearly, to the people who make decisions. My own advocacy has mostly been for LGBTQIA+ rights. It started when I was a student, carried on through my previous roles and is now part of my private practice. Organising Pride events at work is one example. I have put the same energy into CALD mental health. On the Board, I would bring this work into the APS's advocacy to government. Closer to home, I value the recognition of advanced training (i.e. clinical psychology). I have done a good deal of it myself, and I know how much it matters to members that it is properly recognised.

Ability and/or aptitude to act as an ambassador for the APS in the community and in government settings

I am proud to be a clinical psychologist, and I think that shows when I talk about what we do. I talk to university students about the Society, and when I work with other professionals, I often end up explaining what clinical psychologists do. Plenty of people (including some in decision-making roles) still have only a rough idea of what a psychologist is trained to do, or of how the areas of practice differ and what each one brings (i.e., the value of clinical psychology). I am used to speaking with different audiences, and my talks on psychological wellbeing for Study Melbourne, a Victorian Government initiative for international students, are one example. The other message I keep coming back to is unity. Our profession has spent a lot of energy divided, and I really believe our voice is stronger when psychologists stand together. Holding four endorsements, I understand the competing interests from more than one side and believe I can help bridge that divide. That is what I would take into community and government settings for the APS: one profession with many skills, speaking with one voice.

Demonstrated ability to constructively resolve conflict

Most of my experience with conflict comes from managing people. Running a multidisciplinary practice means bringing together clinicians who are well trained, care a lot about their clients and do not always agree with each other. I have been in meetings where staff members held very different opinions, and it was my job to sort it out. The biggest thing I have learned is that people need to be heard out before anything else can happen. If someone feels cut off or dismissed, they will keep arguing the point long after a decision has been made. So I slow things down, let each person explain their view and check that I have understood it before I respond. As a psychologist, it is tempting to stop at understanding, but as a manager I also have to make sure a clear, fair decision is reached and that people know why. I expect disagreement on a Board, and I would bring the same patience to it. I can also stand by a hard decision once it has been made.

Demonstrated ability to conduct fair, respectful and ethical interactions with fellow Board members, the CEO, APS members and relevant stakeholders

Fairness, respect and ethics are where I start from, both as a psychologist and as a person. I like connecting with people, and I would much rather hear someone out than assume I already know what they think. My work puts me in contact with a wide mix of people. I see clients from many cultural backgrounds, clinicians from other disciplines, students, researchers and other professionals. They do not all see things the way I do, and I have come to value that. On a Board, these values look quite practical, such as coming to meetings prepared, listening before I speak and being upfront when I disagree. They also mean treating the CEO and staff as colleagues whose work I respect, while still asking the questions a Director is there to ask. And every member, whichever part of the profession they come from, deserves the same respect from the people they elect. I would want anyone who has dealt with me, whether or not they agreed with me, to say I listened and was fair.

CANDIDATE DISCLOSURES**Declaration of Interests – General**

- Owner of Back On Track Psychology
- Nothing further to declare

Declaration of Interests – Directorships/Committee Memberships

- Nothing further to declare

Declaration of Interests – APS Member Groups/APS Committee Memberships

- Nothing further to declare

Declaration of Interests – Other Memberships

- Nothing further to declare