

24 April 2026

APS Submission to the ABS OSCA 2027 Update Consultation

The following is the Australian Psychological Society (APS) submission to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Occupation Standard Classification for Australia (OSCA) 2027 Update consultation survey.

Question: Are there any occupations in OSCA that are not accurately described?

1. Psychologist (261231): Incomplete specialisations

The APS reiterates the position in our September 2024 submission to the ANZSCO Comprehensive Review (Round 4), that the specialisations listed under Psychologist (261231) should include all nine Areas of Practice Endorsement (AoPEs) recognised by the Psychology Board of Australia (PsyBA). Sport and Exercise Psychologist and Community Psychologist are currently omitted.

PsyBA data show that more than 100 psychologists have an endorsement in sport and exercise psychology and more than 50 have an endorsement in community psychology. Omitting these highly qualified psychologists from OSCA is inconsistent with their regulatory status. It also has the effect of continuing to erase a small but essential part of the profession from official labour market data, with downstream consequences for workforce planning, skilled migration, and service delivery.

We also note that the single-occupation structure for Psychologist is relatively new, and that Census data is therefore likely to undercount practitioners in smaller specialisations. Historically, psychologists have reported “psychologist” as their occupation because earlier classifications did not reflect the regulated structure of the profession. Using Census counts as a threshold for including a specialisation is not appropriate in this context, as low counts reflect the limitations of past data collection rather than the size or significance of these practice areas.

The APS therefore recommends that Sport and Exercise Psychologist and Community Psychologist be added to the list of specialisations under Psychologist (261231), so that all nine PsyBA Areas of Practice Endorsement are represented.

2. Psychotherapist (261134): Inaccurate occupation description

The APS is concerned that the description of psychotherapist (261134) is inaccurate. Specifically, the description that a psychotherapist “conducts assessments and diagnoses mental and emotional disorders” should be revised.

Assessment and diagnosis of mental disorders is not a defining feature of psychotherapeutic practice. More importantly, psychotherapist is not a regulated title in Australia, and there are no nationally consistent standards governing training or competency in this occupation that would ensure safe conduct of assessment and diagnosis. Including this language in the occupation description overstates the scope of psychotherapists' practice and encroaches on the regulated work of psychologists, who undergo extensive training and are registered with PsyBA specifically to perform these functions.

The APS recommends the removal of the reference to conducting assessments and diagnosing mental and emotional disorders from the description of psychotherapist (261134). The description should focus on the provision of psychotherapeutic interventions, which accurately reflects the work of psychotherapists and appropriately distinguishes their role from the regulated practice of psychologists.

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