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The Cross Agency Taskforce on Regulatory Alignment
Australian Government
Department of Health

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Submitted via upload to: <https://consultation.health.gov.au/best-practice-regulation/aligning-regulation-across-care-and-support-sector>

Dear Sir/Madam

**Australian Psychological Society response to the Australian Government Stage 2 Consultation:
Aligning regulation across aged care, disability support and veterans' care**

The Australian Psychological Society (APS) is responsible for promoting excellence and ethical practice in the science, education and application of psychology as the key discipline for reducing the burden of mental ill-health and increasing the wellbeing and performance of all Australians. The APS has many members who provide psychological services to the participants and consumers of aged care, NDIS and disability services, and veterans' care services.

Thank you for the opportunity to attend a recent consultation workshop and provide this follow up submission in response to the Stage 2 consultation for aligning regulation across the aged care, disability support and veterans' care services systems. We recently responded to the related regulatory alignment consultation about a care and support sector code of conduct, and share the following observations and feedback for your consideration in relation to challenges, solutions, and timeframes to align regulation across the care and support sectors.

The APS agrees that regulatory alignment across the care and support sector is necessary to reduce duplication of regulatory obligations and improve consistency in the safety and quality of care provided to consumers and participants. Regulatory alignment will also increase the flexibility and mobility of the workforce to operate nationally across the care and support sector. It is important to remember that the NDIS, aged care and veteran's services exist to provide reasonable care and support needed by vulnerable participants and consumers to live healthy, safe and fulfilling lives. The APS concurs with statements in the consultation paper that the success of regulatory alignment will be determined by the degree to which care and support provided to participants and consumers: upholds and respects human rights; delivers safe, high quality person-centred care and ensures consumers have the right to make choices about the care and support they receive.

The APS notes that the consultation paper identifies the following regulatory functions across the care and support sector: education; entry (registration, approval, agreement); rules and standards; monitoring, assessment and reporting; complaints; compliance and enforcement and consumer information. We observe that these regulatory functions pertain to the quality assurance of providers and workers.

We argue for additional regulatory obligations for the Commonwealth departments/funders and highlight the recent introduction of the NDIA Participant Service Guarantee (PSG). This was an overdue and necessary step in quality assurance that aims to improve the NDIS participant and potential participant experience by establishing transparent timelines, service standards and performance reporting at the funder/departmental level (versus provider and worker levels). We argue, based on the challenges reported by our members and the NDIS participants they support, that a departmental/funder PSG in addition to the regulations for providers and workforce are critical for quality and safety assurance across the care and support sector. We also argue that department/funder PSG regulations must include accountabilities based on the evaluation of the funder/departmental impact on participants' lives in addition to quantitative performance measures.

The APS reminds the Government that psychologists (and other registered health professionals) have well-established and rigorous professional registration requirements as regulated by AHPRA, including checks for criminal history, required disclosure for any changes to criminal history and mandated continuing professional development. We recommend the task force consider reducing duplication and additional burdens of time and costs for psychologists and other registered health professions in the near term by incorporating AHPRA registration processes for health professional entry and education requirements for the care and support sector. An aligned consumer complaints system for the care and support sector should also triage complaints to AHPRA for registered health professionals.

The APS appreciates that reform of the care and support sectors, including regulatory realignment, is complex and will be achieved over the medium to longer term. We commend the development of a roadmap with steps and timeframes as one of the outcomes of this consultation. We are, however, concerned that in the absence of the roadmap, regulatory alignment initiatives and consultations to date have coincided with NDIS, aged care and veteran's reform initiatives and consultations. This has resulted in a disjointed approach with a high volume of consultations with limited notice and short-time frames for feedback afforded to consumers, as well as providers and the workforce who often work across these sectors with limited time and resources to respond.

The APS calls for the publication of the roadmap as a matter of urgency to assist the care and support sector consumers, providers and workforce to be fully involved in consultations and decision making that will shape the future of the care and support sector in Australia. Generous notice periods and timeframes for consultation and co-design will be essential. The roadmap should include regulatory alignment initiatives as well as the key NDIS, aged care and veterans' services initiatives and consultations with regular coordinated communications across these areas.

More broadly, it is unclear how the Federal Government proposes to move forward with recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety and NDIS and veteran's care reforms while also navigating these complex regulatory alignment processes. The APS calls for clarity on these matters.

The APS has a long history of working with the Government and other agencies to establish regulations and standards to ensure the quality and safety of care in the disability, aged care and veterans' support sectors. The APS has a vital contribution to make to the current reforms across these sectors and welcomes the opportunity to provide input and partner with the Government around critical matters pertaining to the psychology workforce. We look forward to a care and support sector that ensures equitable, accessible and effective services and supports that enables people who receive care and support to live healthy and fulfilling lives.

Thank you again for the opportunity to respond to this consultation. If any further information is required from the APS I would be happy to be contacted through my office on (03) 8662 3300 or by email at z.burgess@psychology.org.au

Kind regards

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Chief Executive Officer