

APAC Community of Practice Conference 2025

Session Highlights Summary

Introduction

This document provides session-by-session highlights from the 2025 Community of Practice Conference, held virtually on 5 November 2025, where presentation materials are not available. It is designed to support sector reflection, share key insights, and provide a clear record of the discussions across the day. Where presentation materials are available, these can be accessed on the APAC [conference webpage](#).

The highlights summarise the purpose of each session, major themes emerging from panellists and presenters, and key questions raised during discussions. They are intended as a reference point for education providers, regulators, practitioners, students and partners contributing to the ongoing evolution of psychology education and training in Australia.

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Session Highlights

1. Opening Remarks

Speaker(s): Adjunct Professor John Dunn and Mr David Ensor.

Purpose: To set the context for the conference by emphasising good practice, continuous improvement and collaboration across training, placement and professional pathways.

Key Insights

- Psychology education must balance innovation, risk-proportionate approaches and work readiness.

- Training should reflect the continuum from education to placement to employment.
- Partnerships and evidence are essential drivers of improvement, supported by feedback from supervisors, employers and clients.
- The system must remain flexible and responsive to emerging workforce needs.

2. Psychology Board of Australia Keynote

Speaker(s): Ms Rachel Phillips

Purpose: To provide insights from the National Board into professional issues affecting the psychology workforce.

Key Insights

- Psychology ranks as the third-highest health profession for notifications, with communication representing the most common issue.
- Communication issues often relate to reflective practice and are frequently taught late in training.
- Increasing the diversity of the profession remains a critical priority.
- The Board is considering the implications of earlier exit points (e.g., psychology assistants) and the meaning of 'uncoupling' for areas of practice.
- Industry needs and community needs do not always align, and reforms must acknowledge both.

3. Imagining the Future of Psychology Education and Training

Speaker(s): Mr David Ensor, Adjunct Professor John Dunn (Chair), Professor Maria Kangas, Mrs Sonja Pohlman and Dr Zena Burgess.

Purpose: A plenary panel exploring the future of psychology education and training in Australia. The session examined emerging challenges, reform priorities and opportunities for collaboration across the profession.

Key Insights

Simulation and Curriculum Development

- Increased need for simulation fluency, systems-oriented knowledge and evidence evaluation.
- Closer collaboration between HEPs and industry can strengthen applied learning.

Practicum and Placement Ecosystem

- Practicum is now national, not local, with growing online opportunities.

- The placement ecosystem has significantly changed; assumptions require re-examination.
- Resourcing reduces competition and supports equitable access.
- Culture must normalise performance difficulties, remediation and developmental growth.

Cultural Responsiveness

- Cultural safety must be genuine, not performative.
- The Australian Indigenous Psychology Education Project (AIPEP) was recognised for its leadership.
- Integration should not be limited by fear of what the system might lose.

Resourcing and Innovation

- Smaller HEPs often carry the burden of innovation.
- Models like British Columbia's (Canada) 'sandbox' approach can facilitate safe experimentation.
- Student selection practices may contribute to indirect discrimination and require review.

Regulation and Workforce Expectations

- All stakeholders have a role in ensuring public safety and quality.
- Employers need clearer expectations regarding graduate capabilities.

4. Understanding and Applying the Professional Competencies and Code of Conduct

Speaker(s): Professor Linda Byrne.

Purpose: To provide an education provider's perspective on embedding the Psychology Board of Australia's Professional Competencies and Code of Conduct.

Key Insights

- Embedding all eight competencies may take up to 12 months, particularly for Professional Competencies 3, 6, 7 and 8 (self-care, cultural safety and digital practice).
- Transitional strategies include pre-placement workshops, micro-OSCEs and reflective journals.
- Some competencies (e.g. ethics) are already strongly embedded and require minimal change.
- Providers must update student-informed consent processes; responsibility lies with the person sourcing client information. Informed

consent for clients may impact a student's ability to present and use de-identified case studies in programs.

- The APS Code of Ethics is aspirational and voluntary, applying to APS members. The new PsyBA Code of Conduct is enforceable under the National Law.

5. Placement Models – Partnership and Practice at Scale

Speaker(s): Ms Jacinta Connor and Associate Professor Megan Jenkins.

Purpose: To showcase innovative and sustainable responses to placement challenges and identify priorities for reform.

Key Insights

- The placement ecosystem involves many interdependent stakeholders, and the delivery of services to the public is the ultimate part of placement. Most programs have a national approach to this.
- System challenges include fragmented funding, capacity erosion, short-term fixes, sector silos and increased transactional partnerships.
- Balancing loops include integrated education-embedded services, partnership maturity, talent, cross-sector collaboration/co-design and co-funding innovation.
- Placement locations are shifting based on community need, with growth in school-based and rural models.
- Case examples demonstrate successful innovations:
 - **Federation University:** 107 placements of 315 hours each in 2025. This dramatically increased the number of students that Federation University were able to take on in their programs. 6,654 sessions delivered to 940 clients (2024); ~10,000 sessions this year.
 - **One Tree Resource Centre:** rural mental health training hub in Victoria, with a high suicide prevalence and low access to psychologists. Through partnering with schools for placement pilots, 40 placements are now offered each year with a focus on service delivery and training. Now has 4 years of government support to continue the program.
 - **Psychologists in Schools:** co-funded service model with schools paying for services. Placement-focused business model.
- Next steps include:
 - Developing an agreed national model.
 - Strengthening cross-sector collaboration and innovation.
 - Ensuring reforms consider models that integrate a student's developmental pathway.
 - Shifting funding to support critical enablers.
 - Direct HEP engagement with government.

6. Reflections on Contemporary Practice

Speaker(s): Professor Bethany Wootton (Chair), Ms Debbie Anderson, Ms Emily Johnson and Associate Professor Jacqui Yoxall.

Purpose: To explore how contemporary psychology practice is evolving and how education and training can adapt in response.

Key Insights

- Funding models increasingly require psychologists to do more with less, contributing to commodification.
- Graduate expectations are rising, with pressure to be 'work-ready' immediately upon entering the workforce.
- Diversity is lost at multiple transitions in the training pathway; student selection methods require reconsideration.
- Gaps persist between training and practice in areas such as:
 - Business management
 - System navigation
 - Private vs public practice
 - Technology
 - Handling complex presentations
- Solutions include:
 - A greater variety of pathways rather than a focus on perfection.
 - Better recognition and remuneration for practising psychologists contributing to academia.
 - Stronger connections between HEPs and workplace settings.

7. Work-readiness and Graduate Outcomes: From Study to Meaningful Work

Speaker(s): Ms Jillian Harrington (Chair), Ms Kathryn Kallady, Ms Sahra O'Doherty and Mr Gregory Buck

Purpose: A panel exploring how psychology education can better prepare graduates for meaningful contributions to the workforce and wider community

Key Insights:

- There is a strong consensus that the sector does not have sufficient supervisory capacity to ensure all graduates are adequately supported as they enter the workforce.
- Practicum training is shifting toward models that emphasise transferable and foundational skills, alongside discipline-specific competencies.

- Graduates require clearer guidance on employment options at each stage of the pathway, including roles that are feasible and those that are not.
- Work-readiness skills are often underdeveloped. Programs need to embed job skills, workplace capability and applied experience throughout training, noting that high program demands limit students' ability to seek external experience.
- Graduates must demonstrate independence, trustworthiness, competence and adaptability to be workforce ready. These expectations apply across the entire training pathway.
- There is support for introducing practicum-based learning earlier, enabling gradual competency development rather than a late-stage concentration of applied experience.
- Work readiness must account for the breadth of practice contexts, including rural, regional and state-based environments.
- Reflexivity should be developed from the beginning of training and embedded across all levels.
- Psychology pathways remain highly exclusive and restrictive, limiting entry for those from diverse educational and professional backgrounds.
- Expanded pathway options, such as research assistant and psychology assistant roles, may support more flexible routes into the profession.
- Supervision remains a strength of the profession but requires resourcing and structural support to maintain quality and sustainability.

8. Achieving Competence Through Placement – How Much is Enough?

Speaker(s): Associate Professor Rachel Dryer (Chair), Mrs Amanda Curran, Mr Andrew Chua, Ms Emma-Jane Harrison and Professor Gavin Beccaria.

Purpose: A panel examining how placement hours, structure and supervision contribute to student competence.

Key Insights:

- There was a strong consensus that placement should be paid, reflecting the significant service contribution students make and the increasing demands placed on them during training.
- Panellists discussed the need for clearer frameworks for recognising prior learning, including who should make these judgements and what constitutes equivalent evidence of competence.
- The introduction of the new cultural competency requirements will influence placement expectations and assessment, requiring explicit attention from providers and supervisors.
- Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs) were identified as a potential tool for assessing specific competencies, potentially reducing assessment burden on placement settings.

- Heads of Discipline were noted as having a critical role in advocating for adequate supervision resourcing within institutional budgets.
- There was support for considering artificial intelligence as an emerging tool to support placement and supervision activities, acknowledging both opportunities and the need for careful governance.