



**VAL LISHMAN**  
Health Research Foundation

The Hon Dr. K.D. Hames, MLA  
28<sup>th</sup> Floor Governor Stirling Tower,  
197 St. Georges Tce.,  
PERTH  
W.A. 6000

Dear Minister Hames

The Val Lishman Health Research Foundation is a community driven volunteer organisation that promotes health research in the South West region of Western Australia. The Foundation plays a brokerage role in initiating research by establishing research priorities, initiating specific research, soliciting community and industry support, identifying key researchers, and coordinating finance. The Foundation is innovative and pioneering - there is no similar community based research organisation in Australia that raises and deploys funds in a rural area for direct community benefit. Indeed, the Foundation provides a role model for other communities.

The current initiative to establish a National Registration and Accreditation Scheme for health professionals is applauded by the Foundation. However, it has been brought to the attention of the Foundation that the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council has elected not to recognize community psychology as an area of specialist practice for psychologists under the Scheme. This is of particular concern to the Foundation, which supports work based in the clear and specific framework of specialization of community psychology.

Community psychologists are involved in many areas of the health sector. One of the Foundation's major projects is the "*Suicide Prevention in the South West*" research project, being conducted by Professor Brian English from Edith Cowan University, and Chair of the WA College of Community Psychologists (Australian Psychological Society). The aim of this project is to improve the treatment and support for residents in the SW at risk of suicide. The project includes assessing the risk profile of 12 sectors of the SW to better understand the different demand profiles; creating an inventory of all SW psycho-social support services, and assessing the capacity of the SW region against the Federal LiFE framework recommendations.

This project is of vital significance to the SW - not only for meeting the needs of people at risk of suicide, but also because of the profound and traumatic effects on those left behind. The cost of suicide on communities is also profound – including the economic, social and psychological burdens it creates.

Given the critical importance of community psychology in dealing with community mental health issues, we urge you to reconsider the decision not to acknowledge community psychology within the national registration and accreditation scheme. Indeed, the Foundation advocates for furthering the role of community psychology in

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advancing community well-being, promoting the need for community psychologists in regional Western Australia, and developing expertise, training etc to meet demand for skills in these areas. Recognition of community psychology as an endorsed area of practice within the national registration and accreditation scheme is essential.

Yours Sincerely

David Trench  
Chair

Prof. Adrian R. Egan FTSE  
VLF Honorary Research Manager  
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