

Dr Melissa Hughes and Dr Amanda J White, Forensic Neuropsychologists

What is Forensic *Neuropsychology*?

- *Neuropsychology* is a specialty area of psychology that focuses on understanding how the brain and nervous system impact behaviour and daily functioning.
- *Neuropsychologists* undertake intensive specialised training on disorders related to impairments in brain functioning.
- Although all psychologists use psychometric tests, *Neuropsychologists* use a range of cognitive tests, with assessments individualised based on the clients presenting issue and referral question. *Neuropsychologists* interpret results from such tests in the context of all available information, comprehensively analysing and relating this information to brain-behaviour relationships.
- *Neuropsychologists* will have **endorsement** in *Clinical Neuropsychology*.
- When requiring your expert to give an opinion on a legal question a ***forensically trained neuropsychologist*** should be obtained.
- To ensure your using the right specialist you can check the regulatory body AHPRA, which can be checked at <http://www.ahpra.gov.au/Registration/Registers-of-Practitioners.aspx>
- Click on 'view details' under the professional's name and look under the endorsement for their approved area(s) of practice.

What is involved in a *Neuropsychological Assessment*?

- Thorough interview.
- Informal and formal evaluation of all cognitive functions (e.g. attention, memory, problem solving and decision making) using both clinical experience and standardised neuropsychological tests.
- Depending on the referral question, other factors impacting neurological and general functioning are also assessed (e.g., malingering, mood, personality).
- Review of collateral Information including legal documentation, neuroimaging, medical reports, academic and work reports.
- Comprehensive interpretation of the objective and subjective information integrating forensic, medical and psychological perspectives.

NB. The face-to-face component of the assessment generally takes around four hours. The entire assessment process often requires around 14 hours. Generally allow 14 days from completion of an assessment until report submission.

Benefits of *Neuropsychological Assessment*

- Although *Neuropsychological* assessments appear expensive, the comprehensive nature and provision of information regarding diagnosis, prognosis, and expertise in addressing questions relating to cognitive functioning, saves costs associated with cheaper insufficient or inappropriate assessments (i.e. conducted by those without endorsement in neuropsychology).
- Objective assessment of a client's cognitive difficulties enabling more accurate treatment recommendations and definitive implications for legal outcomes e.g. determination of degree and severity of impairment.

When is a *Neuropsychological* assessment indicated?

- If the client appears to have or reports cognitive difficulties (e.g. significant memory decline, intellectual disability), or there has been a head injury, stroke or other neurological episode possibly impacting brain functioning.
- Neuropsychology can provide information regarding the extent and impact of the injury for clinical care, functional and legal matters.
- **Forensic** Neuropsychological assessment can be indicated for various legal purposes. In criminal law, this could include substantial impairment, fitness to stand trial, mitigating factors on sentencing evidence admissibility.

Who are we?

Dr Hughes and Dr White are dually registered psychologists, holding endorsement as both Clinical Neuropsychologists and Forensic Psychologists. They have experience conducting neuropsychological evaluations in various legal and non-legal settings, for patients with a range of neurological conditions, including acquired brain injury and psychological conditions. They have provided expert reports for court hearings and various tribunals in NSW and Victoria as well as working simultaneously in clinical practice.

Dr White and Dr Hughes are available to discuss any cases with you and provide opinion as to whether Forensic and/or Neuropsychological assessment would be useful in your case and when best to conduct an assessment.

Dr Melissa Hughes

E: mhughes@neuroforensics.com.au

Ph: 0447 843 615

Fax: (02) 9694 1994

Web: www.neuroforensics.com.au

Dr Amanda J White

E: info@nafservices.com.au

Ph: 0422 772 243

Fax: (02) 9501 2739

Web: www.nafservices.com.au