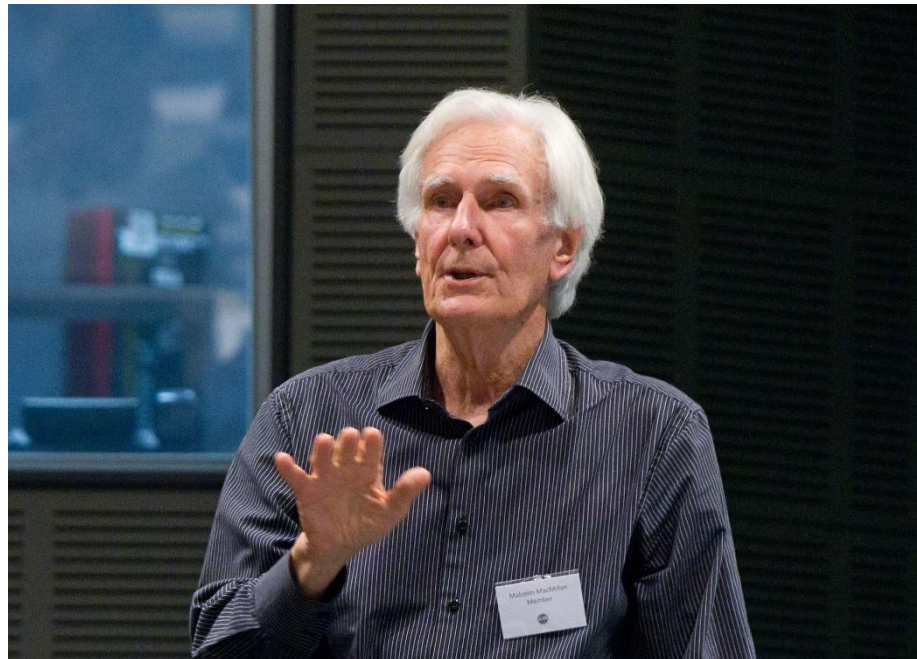


## **Professor Malcolm “Mac” Macmillan obituary**



The Australian Clinical Psychology Association pays respect to Professor Malcolm Macmillan’s legacy. Mac was prominent in Psychology right from the start.

From 1958-1965 he was at various times Committee member, Secretary and Chairman of the Victorian Group of the Australian Branch of the British Psychological Society. And so, Mac found himself at the centre of three critical and related developments in psychology in Victoria with National significance.

### [Board of Inquiry into Scientology 1963-1965](#)

The first was a Victorian state government inquiry into Scientology. The Head of University of Melbourne’s Counselling Service and the University’s Vice Chancellor had warned students against Scientology practices, and concerns were taken up by members of the State Labour Opposition. Scientology was seen as a threat to the public and indeed to psychiatry and psychology. At this stage Scientology presented itself as a science, not a religion (that came later).

Scientology was offering free intelligence and personality tests, which no matter the test results, led to the person needing to undergo auditing and complete courses costing money. When Mac saw the IQ test he could see no norms or attempts at standardisation and the personality test was based on the obsolete Johnson Temperament Test.

Under pressure from various sources, the Victorian Government of the day set up an Inquiry. Remember at this stage, there was no Victorian Registration Board, and the Australian Psychological Society did not exist.

Mac was the Secretary of that Victorian Group of the BPS and worked as a psychologist in the Victorian Mental Hygiene Branch. Because of this and no doubt

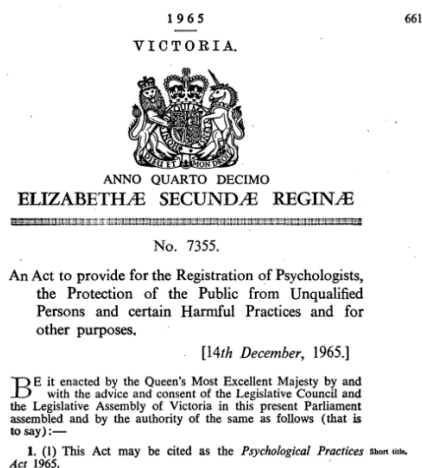
because of his energy and intellectual prowess, Mac was the go-to-person in psychology.

E Cunningham Dax was the head of the state government Mental Hygiene Branch and he asked Mac to assemble key witnesses, and also act as Adviser to Counsel assisting the Board of Inquiry.

Mac gathered a list of impressive names to give evidence to the Board of Inquiry and appeared as a witness and was cross-examined himself.

As we know Mac always dug deeper than anyone else. To get to grips with the tenets of Scientology, he read what he could of L Ron Hubbard's work and the auditing process. As he went to the primary sources, he found that the so-called scientific underpinnings were absent. Other eminent witnesses testified to this as well and scientology as science was thoroughly debunked.

### Establishment of the Victorian State Psychology Registration Board 1965



In the second major development, in 1965, Mac found himself, because of his role in the Inquiry, a member of the Committee Advising the Parliamentary Draftsman on the Victorian Psychological Practices Act and again acting on behalf of the Victorian Group of the BPS. This Act led to the first state registration Board in Australia.

### Establishment of the Australian Psychology Society 1966

The third related development was the foundation of the Australian Psychological Society thus separating from the British Psychological Society. From 1963-1964 Mac was a Member of the Committee to Draft the Constitution of the APS. From 1984-1985 he was APS President.

### The clinical psychology sphere

Mac had always had an interest in clinical work. When he began his work as a psychologist in the Mental Hygiene Branch in 1955 there were only 15 psychologists. He worked in Travancore, but also with children with severe and profound intellectual disability who were domiciled in Kew Cottages (now long decommissioned). The medicos tended to ignore the social learning abilities of this population. Mac pointed out that the teaching of basic independent living skills, as

we now call it, was an integral part of his approach, although he also acknowledged he and others were flying by the seat of their pants.

Mac remained active in the clinical sphere when he took the job at Monash University and subsequently at Deakin, maintaining his involvement with the profession. In 1968 he was a Founding Committee Member of the Division (later Board and then College) of Clinical Psychologists of the APS. From 1980-1988 he was Chairman of the Clinical Courses Approval Committee.

Then in March 2010, as part of the so-called Melbourne Six, Mac resigned from the Australian Psychological Society and from the College of Clinical Psychologists.

From the early 1990s until 2006 there were ongoing tensions between the Clinical College and the APS Board. The points of concern included the lack of APS support for specialist title in the lead up to the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme, restrictions to communications between the Clinical College Board and its members, and the APS management of the Medicare rebate system by qualifying as many APS members as possible for clinical college membership, regardless of their clinical qualifications. This came to a head when the APS Executive Director and President sent a letter to the Victorian Section committee which was perceived as threatening and disrespectful. The resignation of many clinical psychologist senior members of the APS, including Mac, ultimately led to the formation of a national association for clinical psychologists – the Australian Clinical Psychology Association.

### The Malcolm Macmillan Prize



In 2013 ACPA established the Malcolm Macmillan prize for student members which began as an essay competition and since 2017 changed format to a 3-minute thesis with a focus on clinical research.

This prize will continue in perpetuity in recognition of Mac's long and significant contribution to the science and practice of clinical psychology.

We thank Emeritus Professor Edith Bavin for providing us with copies of Mac's CV, his paper on Scientology and his paper on his work at Kew Cottages. With her permission, we will be storing these documents in the ACPA Archives.

[Professor Caroline Hunt](#), [Emeritus Professor Henry Jackson](#), and [Dr Lesley Bretherton](#).