

26.7.11

Senate Affairs Committee,

RE: Review of total Medicare sessions.

To the Committee,

I wish to express my concern at the decision to cut the number of Medicare sessions from a maximum of 18 to 10 per calendar year. I am a Clinical Psychologist working in a private practice co-located with 6 psychiatrists. I receive many referrals from the psychiatrists and offer bulk-billing to all who are referred to me.

The majority of referrals I receive are diagnosed with severe mental disorder including schizophrenia, bipolar, agoraphobia, panic disorder, borderline personality disorder, major depression, generalised anxiety disorder and post traumatic stress disorder. Eighteen sessions gives some scope for therapeutic change. Ten sessions will severely limit what can be achieved. These are clients whose conditions have a profound impact on their lives and their ability to function in the community.

Many of these clients have had previous or ongoing crisis contact with public mental health. It is a concern of mine the suggestion that the public system will be able to pick up these clients when they no longer have the 18 sessions available. Coming from ten years in the public health system I know how stretched these services are and I suspect it will be difficult for them to engage the large volume of clients that are not able to access the 18 sessions available at present.

I hope that you will consider my submission. I leave my contact details below.

Yours sincerely,

Brett Jones
Clinical Psychologist (MAPS, CCLIN)