

16 November 2017

Senator Rachel Siewert  
Committee Chair  
Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

By email to: [community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au)

Dear Senator

**Re: Value and affordability of private health insurance and out-of-pocket medical costs**

Thank you for giving the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) the opportunity to present at the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs' public hearing on Tuesday 31 October 2017 regarding the inquiry into the 'Value and affordability of private health insurance and out-of-pocket medical costs' (the Inquiry). I am pleased to now communicate our response to a question taken on notice about the proportion of patients with a mental illness treated in the private sector.

Whilst there is no data available to the RANZCP that directly addresses this question, we can offer the following information that may be of assistance:

- The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's report on *Admitted patient mental health-related care* notes that there were more than 254,800 mental health-related separations in public and private hospitals in 2014–15.
- The Australian Private Hospitals Association's report on private hospital-based psychiatric services for 2015–16 notes that 63 private hospitals admitted 37,764 patients for psychiatric care, corresponding to 42,395 separations in 2015–2016.
- These numbers are likely to remain relatively stable over time and therefore it can be estimated that private hospitals account for approximately 16.5% of all mental health hospital care in Australia.

The RANZCP strongly supports the purpose of the Inquiry considering the significant out-of-pocket costs that can arise when patients seek to use their private health insurance policies for psychiatric care. I trust that the information provided will assist in your deliberations on how to improve the system to optimise outcomes for our patients.



The Royal  
Australian &  
New Zealand  
College of  
Psychiatrists



If you would like to discuss any of these issues further, I can be contacted via the RANZCP Manager, External Relations, Tara Bates PhD,

Yours sincerely

Dr Kym Jenkins  
**President**

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