

**Tuesday, 9 August 2011**

**Dear Committee:**

**RE: COMMONWEALTH FUNDING AND ADMINISTRATION OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

**Better Access Changes**

I am currently working in Private Practice and have almost 9 years clinical experience in both mental health and disability. The proposed reduction in the number of sessions that patients can access from 18 to only 10 sessions is detrimental to the community. Firstly, research generally supports the finding that patients with mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety, need more than 15 sessions of therapy in order to create a clinically significant change. Secondly, there is a minority of patients that require the full 18 sessions due to the severity of their condition. This includes those who are suicidal or severely affected in other ways preventing them from being able to function and participate fully in their lives. To refuse the additional 8 sessions to this client group would negligent and derelict to our ethos of 'Do No Harm'. We have a duty of care as psychologists to provide the best practise standards to our patients. We can't do that if the sessions are reduced to 10.

**The two-tiered Medicare rebate system for psychologists**

This current two-tiered structure for psychologists is unfair and discriminatory. I am a generalist psychologist and I take offense to this type of distinction between clinical psychologists and other endorsed psychologists. As a generalist I have 4 years of university training and two years of intense supervised practise which included rigid supervision and formal assessment processes across six areas of competency. My skill set and clinical experience is as valid as a clinical psychologist and I do not believe that there would be any evidence to demonstrate a difference in outcomes in the populations being treated.

I hope you take the time to consider the impact of your policy changes on our community. Mental health is so precious and needs to be equally valued in our society like any other major health concern. Strong communities build strong futures and are resilient to change.

Yours sincerely,

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