

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2010-11, 20 October 2010

Question: E10-099

OUTCOME 11: Mental Health

Topic: BETTER ACCESS

Written Question on Notice

Senator Boyce asked:

- a) In regard to the Government's announcement that social workers and OT's will be excluded from the Better Access program, what will be the increased cost of this decision to tax payers given that rebates for clinical psychologists for a 50 minute session are \$117.65, for general psychologists is \$80.20, while the same sessions conducted by social workers cost in rebates \$70.65?
- b) Is it not true that the only way this decision saves money is by the current clients of social workers going without any service?
- c) How can this decision, limiting access for mental health clients, be justified in light of the research by Access Economics that has found only 35% of people with a mental illness receive form of treatment, while for those aged between 16-24 it's just 25%?

Answer:

a, b and c)

The Minister for Health and Ageing, the Hon Nicola Roxon MP, and the Minister for Mental Health and Ageing, the Hon Mark Butler MP, announced on 12 November 2010 that social workers and occupational therapists will continue to be able to provide Medicare-funded services under the Better Access initiative.