

To Whom It May Concern.

I have watched with great concern as the two-tiered Medicare system has been used to create an arbitrary distinction between psychologists that is not based on any empirical data. The two-tiered system creates the implication that over 80 % of psychologists in Australia are inferior to those who have completed a clinical masters. It is well-known that entry into the clinical masters is limited to a very small number of spaces per year and the majority of psychologists must get their experience as therapists in real-world settings rather than a university.

In my own case I have completed a masters in psychology and also completed two years of supervised real-world experience in clinical settings. In addition I have worked in private practice and as a therapist for the last 15 years. I find it insulting that my years of experience and my years of education are being denigrated, particularly on the basis of a difference in the degree that I have completed. It is also insulting that my skills and experience are to be considered less than those of a graduate who may have just come out of university with minimal experience but has a specially favoured degree.

The two-tiered system is unfair and is causing an unnecessary schism between psychologists. By creating this culture of elitism the two-tiered system is creating the false impression that some psychologists are better than others merely on the basis of their choice of degree. In my experience there are an enormous number of people who require psychological help and these numbers are increasing. To denigrate the skills of 80% of those who are quite able to provide that help on the basis of an unproven dichotomy is only a few steps away from removing those individuals from the provision of services that they are quite qualified to provide. It is already the case that some GPs are no longer referring patients to generalist psychologists on the basis of the illusion that clinical psychologists must be superior. This means that over time waiting lists are going to grow and the prevalence of mental health concerns in the community will continue to be unaddressed.

I urge you to reconsider this divisive and unfair system.

Yours,

a concerned psychologist