

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Dear Committee Members

1. I wish to make a submission in relation to the inquiry into the Commonwealth Funding and Administration of Mental Health Services.
2. I have held full registration as a Psychologist since 1995 and prior to undertaking full time study to become a Psychologist I served 6 years in an Artillery Regiment and then 12 years as an operational Police Officer. I have extensive experience in relation to the value of hands on experience compared to the shortfalls of mere academic reliance. My two years of supervised practice after graduation was in Secure Care Forensic Hospital, Public and Private Psychiatric Hospitals and Correctional Centres. A level of daily training and practical experience that has continued and would not have been available if I had decided to only undertake two further years of university study.
3. I have read with interest the submissions already submitted to the Committee and I feel there are a number of misconceptions and misinformation that need to be brought to your attention.
4. All Psychologists are 6 year trained. Either by attending an additional two years of university study or by undertaking two years of supervised practice before being able to gain full registration. It has been my experience that those Psychologists who attend the two additional years of university are limited in their exposure to practical hands on professional training. The two years of university study exposes these students to clinical interventions in very controlled University Clinic situations with the majority of clients being fellow university students or members of the public with moderate levels of psychological issues. Acute psychological or psychiatric clients are only seen in Private or Public Hospital settings.

5. Therefore, those Psychologists that undertake the two years of supervised practice work in the acute areas of Psychology and have ongoing training by supervision and weekly attendance at clinical team meetings. Their level of professional training is daily five days a week. Those undertaking the additional two years of university may have a few hours a week in the university clinic. They are exposed to a high level of theoretical information with no day-to-day exposure to experienced clinicians and Psychiatrists in the "real world" of clinical treatment.
6. The introduction of the two-tier Medicare system appears to have been promoted by those wishing to create a sense of elitism within the profession of Psychology. After reading the submissions of those wanting the two tier system to remain I am left with the impression that a number of those Psychologist that use the title Clinical Psychologist rely solely on the higher rebates for their practice income. One must ask whether their concern is more "Income protection" and "professional elitism" rather than client welfare.
7. These elitists also try to suggest that a mere further two years of university study places them on a par with Psychiatrists. This is ridiculous, as Psychiatrists have to undertake 6 years of medical study to become a Doctor and a number of years of internship working excessively long hours dealing in the real world or medicine. Then to become a Psychiatrist they must undertaken many years of further study and practical training.
8. The term "Clinical Psychologist" merely identifies those Psychologists who have completed 6 years of university study with **NO** exposure to the treatment of acute patients in a day-to-day "real world" clinical setting.
9. The facts are that about 86% of registered Psychologists have undertaken the 6 years of training with two of those years being supervised practice five days a week over the two years. (Excluding leave periods). Only a mere 14% have opted for the two years of university study with the limited hands on professional training.
10. I would submitted that the most cost effective way to ensure that taxpayers money is used effectively is to introduce a one level of rebate to Psychologists and that being the current \$81.60. This is an adequate reimbursement and will ensure that Psychologists are unable to, as is the case now, set up a practice solely funded by Medicare referrals using the higher rebate paid to "Clinical Psychologists". I have found the 12 sessions that were previously allocated to be a realistic period for a psychological intervention.

11. There should also be investigations into whether the Australian Psychological Society (APS) has had undue influence in the setting up of the current two tier Medicare system and whether a ethical conflict of interest is taking place in the APS promoting the role of so called clinical psychologists over those of the remaining 86% of Psychologists. It is my understanding that the term "Clinical Psychologist" does not appear in the relevant legislation but rather the term "Psychologist".