

To The Senate Estimates Committee: Community Affairs References Committee
enquiring into Commonwealth Funding and Administration of Mental Health Services

Parliament House

CANBERRA ACT

Dear Sirs/Madams,

Re: The Normalising of Psychological Services in the Health System.

I wish to make a contribution to your deliberations with regards to psychology services in the Australian health system and wish to submit that Clinical Psychology has an important place in the Medical services in Australia.

The Efficacy of Clinical Psychology.

I write the following in support of the importance of Clinical Psychology in the Allied Health system. I understand that the Senate Estimates Committee is considering normalising all psychological under one category in the Health system but I would like to submit that a robust evidence based approach is important as it dovetails into the current medical approach and, moreover, based on scientific experience and research.

I am an older person who has had experience with many types of psychological intervention. There is no doubt that some of these interventions are helpful. Similarly, many people are assisted by talking to a close friend or neighbour. I believe it is important to have an intervention that is based on an evidence-based medical model that fits with the current medical system of assessment, diagnosis and treatment. Therefore, I believe that clinical psychologists are an essential part of the fabric if they are going to work with doctors and other medical professionals where specific diagnosis and outcomes are targeted.

Clinical psychologists are highly trained. I have spent more than 15 years studying and lecturing in this subject highlighting a number of approaches to psychological counselling. There are a myriad of theories and approaches depending largely on historical orientation and philosophical/religious perspectives rather than the more current scientific and evidence-based approaches.

What distinguishes Clinical Psychology as a general practice specialty is the breadth of problems addressed and of populations served. Clinical psychologists are trained in research, education and practice based on evidence. It focuses on individual differences, abnormal behaviour, and mental disorders and their prevention, and lifestyle enhancement. Moreover, Clinical Psychology is concerned with assessment, formulation of problems, its development and a specific approach to evaluation of interventions to relieve those problems. There is little doubt that clinical psychologists are important for patient well-being. They communicate and report to doctors in the same language. They are aware of the psychopharmacology involved, and have the ability to make a holistic/psychophysiological assessment of patient's

circumstances and the specific ailment that emanates from these environments. This is especially true where a patient has been subject to misinterpretation of their environment.

Frequently physical, manifestations of stress, anxiety and depression require that a qualified person can assess the lifestyle, beliefs and thinking habits of a patient. Medication alone does not solve these problems. Therefore, it is important to have a well-trained person that can "tie up all the ends." (environment, gender, culture, age, etc.). Psychological assessment requires knowledge of the developmental and sociocultural normative expectations for the individual(s) assessed. The assessment of attitudinal, cognitive psychophysiological, affective, and/or behavioural functions of individuals and groups identify and measure unique characteristics, which may require modification or amelioration to facilitate performance and social competence. It is important to consider that the environment in which a person exists can exacerbate medical conditions, trait like predispositions and personalities.

A qualified psychologist's role is to work at the highest level, providing advice, supervision and training for others; to work directly with complex clinical cases; to carry out and support psychological research

Clinical Psychology is built on knowledge of principles of behavioural change, clinical decision-making, and the professional and ethical concerns surrounding clinical practice. My hope is that the Senate Estimates Committee may take this in consideration as they deliberate about the best way to advance physical and mental health in Australia. I believe that it is important that clinical psychologists be recognised as evidence based professionals who have undergone at least six years of university training as well as mandatorily ongoing professional development after that period.

Yours sincerely,

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