

Dear senate

I have practiced Clinical Psychology for more than 30 years, mostly in my own private practice.

The Better Access initiative has been one of the best programs to help people with mental health issues. It has allowed those unable to afford fees to be bulk billed and has provided preventative treatment, allowing people to stay in the community and function in their daily lives.

I see people who would probably be in hospital if this service was not available. For instance those recently discharged from psychiatric wards after suicide attempts, where follow up facilities are inadequate or just not available, people with psychotic symptoms who can just about manage their lives in the community so long as they have access to the kind of support this program has facilitated, people who are depressed, have severe anxiety symptoms, and so on.

Cutting the number of sessions available does not allow for the amount of time people need to recover and stabilise. There are currently not enough referral points to cater for the large number of people who require help. The very fact that this program has been so heavily utilised indicates the great need there is in the community for this form of help.

The proposal to cut the rebate for clinical psychology further undermines the quality of what is available to the public. Clinical Psychologists have years of training in mental health and are the best qualified to offer treatment specifically for mental health issues.

It is well documented that, particularly depression, is on the increase. Funding for mental health needs to increase not be cut.

There is some duplicity in announcing to the public a new boost to funding for mental health whilst a not so publicised move to cut the budget for services that offer so much help at the grass roots, preventative level is being discussed.

Please think about the population that require good access to treatment and continue to grow the mental health services for now and for the future.

Yours sincerely
Carole Mclean
Specialist Clinical Psychologist