

Commonwealth Funding and Administration of Mental Health Services Submission

Terms of reference:

B(1v): I would like to raise concerns at the reduction of allowed sessions from a possible 18 to 10 for clients referred under the Better Access to Mental Health program. This reduction specifically discriminates against clients with more chronic or severe conditions who require a more intensive and prolonged intervention. These clients are presenting with concerns in the moderate to severe range of complexity. They specifically require more time and particularly the expertise that Clinical Psychologists because of their more in depth training and experience that they bring to their client management.

Recommendation: That the previous allowance of sessions be restored to a possible 18 and that clinical psychologists be endorsed to provide this more extended duration of care because of their more highly developed clinical expertise.

E(1): I would like to raise concerns about any changes to the current two tier system of payment for Psychological Therapy services under the Better Access to Mental Health Services. This system as it currently exists recognises the higher level of training and expertise of Clinical Psychologists that should be recognised in session payment. For Generalist Psychologists to be paid at the same level of Clinical Psychologists would destroy any incentive for students studying Psychology to advance in any further in their training thus lowering the general standard of psychological care for clients with complex mental health issues which clinical training specifically addresses. Gap payments would inevitably increase to address the financial shortfall significantly impacting financially disadvantaged clients. I currently Bulk Bill 60% of my clients. I would not be able to continue this practice if fees were lowered for Psychological Therapy services.

Recommendation: That the two tiered system be maintained and clinical psychologists further be given a specific entitlement to provide extra sessions (up to 18) for moderate to severe clients who are more often referred by GP's to Clinical Psychologists because of their perceived expertise with complex cases.

Reg Davis (BA MPsych) MAPS
2004 Churchill Fellow
Clinical Psychologist