

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to submit my concerns and objections to the cut backs proposed by the current Labor government to the 'Better Access to Mental Health Care Initiative.'

I am a very fortunate recipient of help through this initiative and believe it is of huge benefit to the community, with many economic and social rewards.

When my kids were born I felt I could no longer ignore my depression if I was going to look after them well. Mental health problems run in my family and I wanted to minimise my part in keeping that pattern going. When my GP told me I could see a Clinical Psychologist through this initiative it was a real window of hope.

Seeing a Clinical Psychologist with specialist training has for the first time addressed issues that I struggled with for years, that caused my underemployment and prevented me from participating in the community. Over the past year of appointments I have begun to change my thinking and learn skills to cope. It has meant I can participate with my children, have healthier relationships for them to observe and show them how to persevere. I also feel able to start part time paid work, something that improves my well being, finances, and therefore the whole family.

All this is taking time, reworking patterns of behaviour I learnt over twenty years. In my opinion the twelve sessions per year available to me in the current initiative only just maintain continuity and momentum, enabling me to break old habits. The proposed cuts, where I would have an appointment every two months or once a month for six months of the year, I believe, would mean a very disjointed system where making headway would be impossible. Meanwhile families and children of people such as myself would be affected every day.

I had previously seen other health care professionals regarding some of my problems without significant impact. The proposed cuts to the specialist clinical psychology rebate from \$120 per session to \$75 per session would push the cost of this kind of intervention with a Clinical Psychologist beyond my financial capabilities and I am sure those of many others in my situation. Depression has severely affected my finances and I am sure that of many others. Without access to treatment of this calibre I doubt I will be able to fully participate in the community and my kids will be more severely affected without a positive role model.

I would love to think others, who can not afford to see a Clinical Psychologist but are suffering financially, socially or without employment, can continue to have access to this initiative in its original or even an enhanced form. I believe the twelve sessions per annum with a highly qualified Clinical Psychologist have facilitated change that I have never experienced before. In the future I hope this initiative in mental health is expanded rather than cut back.

Thanks for your time.

Yours faithfully,