

4 August 2011

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

Dear Committee Secretary

Re: Submission for Senate Community Affairs Committee into Commonwealth Funding and Administration of Mental Health Services.

This Submission has been prepared by Dr. Oleh Kay, Consultant Psychiatrist (Western Australia). FRANZCP, MBBS.

I have been a Psychiatrist for 25 years and have worked in mental health for over 30 years. I have a passion for my profession and became a doctor in order to become a Psychiatrist. I am currently working in private psychiatric practice as a Consultant Psychiatrist. I left the public system because of bureaucratic intrusion- it became an accountants final decision whether patients were admitted and when they were discharged.

As far as I am concerned one of the few positive developments in mental health has been the government paying for some psychology services-it allowed me to transfer some of my longer term treatment patients to Clinical Psychologists and this allowed me to see more patients (I do not have a shortage of patients but rather of time).

As far as I am concerned the proposed changes to Better Access are a disaster -and I can't understand how a Registered Psychologist can be compared to a Specialist Clinical Psychologist. Some of my work is about fixing up mistakes made by Registered Psychologists, General Practitioners and counselors. I understand that there has been much politicking by various interest groups saying that there are no differences between the different psychologists-believe me this is nonsense.

As far as I am concerned the government needs to expand services for patients referred to specialist Clinical Psychologists from Psychiatrists and reduce or abolish funding to less trained Psychologists. Furthermore in my experience many, perhaps more entrepreneurial, General Practitioners have proved to be poor gatekeepers in mental health.

Recommendation:

Expand services for patients referred from Psychiatrists to specialist Clinical Psychologists and reduce or abolish funding to less trained Psychologists.