

24th July 2011

In regards to:

- (e) mental health workforce issues, including:
 - (i) the two-tiered Medicare rebate system for psychologists,
 - (ii) workforce qualifications and training of psychologists

In my opinion the two-tiered Medicare system for psychologists reflects the qualifications and training of psychologists, with a higher rebate for clinical psychologists there is an incentive and recognition for psychologists that have higher education, which is specific to the delivery of services related to clinical psychology. If the two-tiered system is dropped there is a far less incentive for psychology students or practicing psychologists to enroll in a Masters, Doctorate or PhD program, which in the future lowers the standard of the psychology workforce. With other countries such as the USA requiring at minimum a Doctorate to practice as a psychologist it is important that Australia tries to meet these high standards. Post graduate degrees such as Masters, Doctorate etc. have a research component which adds to the profession's body of knowledge and is essential in creating evidence based treatments and increasing our understanding of mental health issues.

Australians should have access to first class treatment from health professionals with high standards of training, the impact of placing all psychologists on the same rebate lowers the incentive for professionals to seek further education and does not recognize those that have.

As a clinical psychologist with a Masters degree in clinical psychology and a member of the APS Clinical College I am proud of my training and study to have gained the accreditation. This training relates specifically to clinical psychology and is needed for complex mental health issues at a minimum.

Abolishing the two-tiered system for psychologists would be a great mistake.

Laura Gardner
Clinical Psychologist