



lifeboat stories

Dr Paul Whetham

BA (Hons), PhD (Clin Psych), MAPS
Clinical Psychologist

Mental Health Promotion

Prevention

Early Intervention

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To the Senate Committee's Mental Health Inquiry

**Re: Terms of Reference E (i) – Mental health workforce issues, including:
The two-tiered Medicare rebate system for psychologists**

As a clinical psychologist and former university lecturer who has co-written psychology textbooks I was amazed to hear that the Senate would like the difference between clinical psychologists and psychologists to not be recognised conceptually, industrially or financially.

It is well known by teachers and students of university and high school psychology programs that clinical psychology deals specifically with psychopathology and severe mental illness. The specialist training of clinical psychology postgraduate programs reflects this with the majority of units devoted to assessing, diagnosing, predicting, preventing and treating psychopathology. Indeed, no other specialisation within psychology rigorously examines mental health research and evidenced-based best practice like clinical psychology. This is exactly why clinical psychology is recognised as one of several specialisations within psychology in the United States and Britain.

Further, given the burden of mental illness and the strain on traditional psychiatric services, it makes sense to fund clinical psychology alternatives in the community whereby consumers have ready access to trained specialists who model evidenced-based best practice for a fraction of the cost of seeing a psychiatrist.

Therefore in line with worldwide trends I urge you to continue to recognise the difference between clinical psychologists and psychologists conceptually, industrially and financially and maintain the two-tiered Medicare rebate system for psychologists.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Paul Whetham, PhD (Clin Psych)