

Submission for the Inquiry into Commonwealth Funding and Administration of Mental Health Services

I am currently completing my Masters of Psychology (Counselling) and am a Provisionally Registered Psychologist. After beginning my postgraduate studies to become a Counselling Psychologist, I was shocked and dismayed to learn there exists a two-tiered rebate structure for Medicare rebates; with solely Clinical Psychologists sitting in the top tier. This makes little sense to me, as, like Clinical Psychologists, Counselling Psychologists are required to complete a 2-year Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (APAC) accredited Masters of Psychology program at University. And, just like Clinical Psychologists, Counselling Psychologists are trained in assessment, diagnosis and treatment of a wide range of psychological disorders and complaints.

Unlike Clinical Psychologists however, it is my understanding that most Masters of Psychology programs that Counselling Psychologists complete have a stronger emphasis on psychotherapeutic methods to treat individual psychopathology, actually giving us a broader range of psychotherapeutic skills to draw upon when treating clients. If both Counselling and Clinical Psychologists complete Masters-level study programs both requiring the same amount of practicum's and a research thesis, it makes no sense that Clinical Psychologists are differentiated from Counselling Psychologists via the two-tiered Medicare rebate because of some differences in course structure and emphasis, despite emerging with the same abilities to assess, diagnose and treat psychological disorders. It is for these reasons that I find the two-tiered Medicare rebate structure unfair, unnecessary and ultimately disadvantageous to clients accessing psychological help. I therefore call for it to be amended to better reflect the training and scope of Counselling Psychologists; that is, in line with the rebate clients' of Clinical Psychologists are able to receive.