

Dear Senators,

I am writing to express my concerns at the proposed changes to the above mental health initiative. The Government is to be congratulated for some of the recent mental health initiatives, however to be introduced at the cost of a well established and valuable mental health programme, does not make sense.

Firstly, the proposed reduction from 18 sessions per year to 10 sessions per year, will significantly disadvantage some clients with chronic mental health problems. Although the majority of clients can potentially benefit from the 10 session model, I can think of numerous clinical examples where significant change has been made **after** the 10 session mark. Such clients often suffer from underlying personality structures which can prove resistant to short term therapy; these clients have the potential for change with longer term therapy, hence potentially reducing their impact on acute hospital admissions.

Secondly, the proposed abolition of the two tiered rebate structure is potentially damaging to the psychology profession, and client care. Clinical psychologists **specialise** in the treatment of **chronic** mental health disorders, one could argue it is similar to the difference between a GP and a Physician; GPs manage the everyday medical issues and refer to a physician for more complicated cases. Clinical psychologists have **twice** the academic training as a generalist psychologist, so it is about **knowledge** and **standards**. To not recognise this difference has the potential to dilute the standards of the professions overall; it also gives the impression that one psychologist 'fits all' and an extra 4 years training has no impact on psychological treatment; this is not the case.

I note that some vocal groups within our profession are opposed to the two tiered system, not surprisingly, these groups generally have no post graduate clinical psychology training at a Masters or Doctoral level. Most of these members have had the opportunity to do the extra training required over the past 4 years.

I hope that you give my feedback due consideration

.

Yours sincerely,

Adrian Donoghue (DPsych.)  
Clinical Psychologist

1096 Main Road  
Eltham, Vic, 3095.