

(e) mental health workforce issues, including:

(i) the two-tiered Medicare rebate system for psychologists,

I write this submission as a recent Graduate in the Doctor of Clinical Psychology at Macquarie University.

My Doctorate in Clinical Psychology provided me with both the theoretical background and practice skills to effectively diagnose and treat severe, debilitating psychological disorders. In total it involved eight years of full-time study, research and closely supervised unpaid practice (a total of 600 face to face clinical hours and approx 2000 hours in psychological workplaces across a variety of client service areas). This significant commitment with all the associated personal costs, tangible and intangible, was made so that I could contribute to improvements in mental health at a significant level. To treat all psychologists equally not only takes away any incentive to reach this level of expertise, it also assumes that all psychologists are capable of treating all psychological problems regardless of severity or complexity. I can't imagine being able to help the people I now work with had I just completed a 4 year psychology degree and two years of general supervision as is required by psychologists.

There is also an important consideration to be made about efficiency. Before deciding to become a psychologist, I presented to a general psychologist for a problem that was beginning to impact my performance at work. I had what I now understand to be Panic Disorder. At no stage was my psychologist able, or willing, to explain the way panic disorder works or an evidence-based treatment model. Instead that psychologist convinced me that I needed to visit him once a week for 5 years to talk in depth about all my past and current stresses in what was otherwise a fulfilling and rewarding life. Never did he actually diagnose or address the 'presenting problem'. As a result of my clinical training I am confident that I can assist most people who have a panic disorder such as the one I had, in six or fewer sessions. He just hadn't been trained adequately. I wish as a consumer I had understood the difference between a Psychologist and a Clinical Psychologist. The general public need to know that there is a difference between generalists and specialists in Mental Health just as there are in Medicine.