

26.7.11

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To:

Committee Secretary,
Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs,
PO Box 6100
Canberra ACT 2600

As a Counselling Psychologist with 20 years of experience, predominantly in the public sector, I am writing to express my concern regarding the reduction in the number of sessions available to clients as well as the two tiered rebate system.

As a psychologist that has worked in both public and private sectors, it has been an ongoing concern for me that the public, particularly those on a lower income with less resources and often more vulnerabilities, are forced to wait months for a counseling service. This often results in downward spiraling of mental health and higher rates of hospitalization, medication and family dysfunction. Access through the Better Outcomes program has alleviated this. The vast majority of my clients are easily seen within the 12 session model, however occasionally a client will require further assistance. I find this is particularly relevant to the Eating Disordered clients who are at very high risk of hospitalization and relapse (which is far more costly for the system). There is extremely limited access to public care for these clients in an outpatient system.

My second concern relates to the two tiered system. This has wrought a distressing rift in the psychology community with non-clinical psychologists rightly feeling aggrieved and politically outmaneuvered by their colleagues. As pointed out in the Counselling College submission, there is no evidence to suggest any difference in the quality of service and outcomes for these clients. I therefore request a reconsideration of this system to make this more equitable and in line with overseas acknowledgements of our professions.

Yours truly,

Robyn Habner M.A.P.S
Counselling Psychologist