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05 July 2011

**Submission to the Commonwealth Funding and Administration of
Mental Health Services Committee Inquiry**

My colleagues and I have just been advised by our professional body that the Committee's recommendation may be to simplify the current Medicare rebate system for psychologists to one level at the lower rebate rate. I do not wish to comment on the entitlements of non-clinical psychologists, and have no specific opposition to a one-level system for all registered psychologists. However, in terms of the rebate itself, the current national recommended hourly fee for psychologists is \$218.00. The current scheduled fee for the lowest rebate tier is \$81.60. In my opinion, this hourly fee is not commensurate with the services that clinical psychologists provide, nor reflective of our qualifications. In my opinion it is not reasonable to expect psychologists to work for approximately 35% of the recommended fee.

Our practice at ForensicClinic offers bulk billing services for disadvantaged members of the community, and it would not be viable to continue to provide bulk billing services at the lowest rebate fee. Our minimum hourly fee is the current bulk billing rate of \$119.80, which is still well below the recommended national fee. The cessation of bulk billing would have significant negative consequences for our patients' access to mental health services, also for community risk management as many of our clients are deemed to pose a risk to themselves or others. We would appreciate the Committee's consideration of a rebate fee that allows bulk billing to remain a viable option for the patients of private practitioners.

Yours faithfully,

Dr Georgina O'Donnell
Consultant Forensic & Clinical Psychologist