

I am really concerned that the "better access" scheme to psychologists is being cut. If anything the success of this program shows it should be expanded! The government's money could easily be saved by only requiring GPs to refer once to a clinical psychologist and not require a review after 6 sessions, which only gets in the way! Given that clinical psychologists are specialists in mental health, and GPs are not, a clinical psychologist is in the best position to determine the length of treatment necessary.

Clinical psychology is the only mental health discipline, apart from psychiatry, whose entire accredited training is specifically focused in the field of evidence-based assessment, case formulation, diagnosis and evaluated treatment of mental health issues. Clinical psychologists are highly trained clinicians with either a masters or doctorate degree in clinical psychology. This represents between six and eight years of full time university study at great cost and sacrifice, which has been reflected in the higher specialist Medicare rebate for patients of clinical psychologists. The cuts from 18 sessions a year to 10 directly minimizes the distinct contribution of clinical psychology to specialist mental health care in Australia. The public deserves increased access to these evidence based services! The decision to cut services and redirect funding has compromised consumer choice of provider and access times.

Please revise this cut in the number of sessions. People have benefited so much from seeing psychologists since Medicare came on board and many would not have pursued treatment if it was not government funded! Medicare is the best system to give consumers choice of provider and needs to be supported.