

24 July 2011

Committee Secretary  
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Email: [community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au)

Dear Committee,

#### COMMONWEALTH FUNDING AND ADMINISTRATION OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

I wish to express my concern in relation to the above. Specifically:

1. That the number of sessions available to patients has been reduced from 18 (exceptional circumstances) or 12 (normal circumstances) to only 10 sessions per year.
  - I have a large caseload of patients that require more than 10 sessions per year and are not in a position to afford these extra sessions outside of Medicare-rebated allocation.
  - In these instances, there are insufficient services currently available for a disadvantaged and vulnerable group that will be unable to afford their treatment.
  - I currently bulk bill many of my patients and will be unable to do so if the fee is reduced.
  - A large number of individuals have benefited from the scheme since inception – these people most likely would not have sought treatment if it was not government funded. Medicare is the best system to provide individuals with provider options.
2. Equal recognition of general trained psychologists with psychologists who have completed a Masters Degree
  - I have a Clinical Psychology Masters degree - which has given me two years of further specialist training. As such, I (and my colleagues) have specialist skills that general trained psychologists do not possess. This

training is focussed on evidence based assessment, case formulation, diagnosis and appropriate treatment across a number of complicated disorders.

I sincerely hope that the government re-considers these cuts and changes, and perhaps reviews alternative methods of cost-saving.

For instance, General Practitioners are paid for each referral under the scheme. An option would be to ensure that the referral covers the annual period, and not a set number of sessions.

Also, rather than clinical psychologists having to refer their more complicated patients back to their GP to obtain a medical referral to a psychiatrist, it would make more sense for the psychologist to be able to refer directly.

Thank you for considering this feedback.

Yours faithfully

Serena Cauchi

Registration: PSY0001352173

Eastpoint Tower  
Suite 502, Level 5  
180 Ocean Street  
Edgecliff NSW 2027