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Tuesday, 9 August 2011

Dear Senate Committee

Re your review of Better Access to Mental Health scheme through Medicare.

Changes proposed for clients from 6 + 6 + a further 6 individual sessions under exceptional circumstances and 6 + 6 group sessions to 6 + 4 + a further 4 individual sessions under exceptional circumstances and 6 + 4 group sessions for individuals suffering from mental health issues referred by a GP to a private practice psychologist will disadvantage those most in need.

Your research into the scheme suggests that many people are not accessing more than 10 sessions. However by limiting the sessions to 10 (or 14 in exceptional circumstances) you are disadvantaging those who are most in need of such services. To suggest that they access a different service funded differently undervalues the importance of the client-psychologist relationship. Those more vulnerability in our society often have difficulty forming relationships and / or trusting authority. If a person with mental health issues is wanting to access more than 10 sessions with a particular psychologist, it would suggest that a relationship of trust has developed. In times of crisis this can be a life line for people who do not want to access faceless services where they have to go through the process of retelling their story and establishing trust over and over again. This conclusion has been drawn my clinical experience.

I urge the committee to reconsider the number of services people diagnosed with mental health issues are able to access with a psychologist. I would consider an increase rather than a decrease to be appropriate.

Kind regards

NeLi (Janelle Louise) Martin
Psychologist