

4 August 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

RE: CHANGES TO THE NUMBER OF PSYCHOLOGICAL THERAPY SESSIONS ELIGIBLE FOR MEDICARE REBATES AND THE TWO-TIERED MEDICARE REBATE SYSTEM FOR PSYCHOLOGISTS

I am writing to express my concerns and disappointment to the proposed changes to the 'Better Access to Mental Health Care' Initiative.

I am a clinical psychologist working in a small private practice specialising in autism spectrum disorders. Many of my clients often also present with other associated difficulties (e.g., anger, anxiety, depression and obsessive compulsive disorder). Because of the pervasive, complex and intense nature of the disorder, most of my clients will require more than 12 sessions of therapy in a year. The pending reduction of maximum number of psychological sessions eligible for Medicare rebates will undoubtedly affect many of my clients. Many will struggle to afford the sessions without the medicare rebates. This will, in turn, affect their school and work attendance and performance, and also the quality of their relationships.

As a private practitioner with more than 10 years working as a clinical psychologist, I am disappointed with the proposed change to the two-tiered Medicare rebate system for psychologists. Prior to going back to university to do my postgraduate clinical training, I have a 4-year degree in psychology and about 5 years of working experience as a psychologist. I strongly feel that the proposed change trivialise and devalue the number of years I have worked both as a psychologist and a clinical psychologist, and also the number of years I have spent doing my university degrees.

I urge that my concerns, which are echoed by many of my colleagues, to be considered.

Yours sincerely,
Clinical Psychologist