

Dear Sir/Madam

This is a brief and somewhat inelegant and submission regarding the proposed changes to the two-tiered system for Medicare Psychology Rebates for clients. I am professional doctorate student in Clinical Psychology who has completed 3 placements as well as the main body of my coursework and a considerable proportion of my clinical research. The amount I have learned through coursework and research, in addition to the learning that has occurred during my placements, is substantial. At the start of the program, having done my undergraduate degree and worked full-time for 2 years in the field, I did not anticipate such a steep learning curve. This additional learning and skills development has provided a framework and knowledge base to guide and greatly enhance the knowledge I have gained from supervised practise with clients. My ability to formulate and select evidence based treatments, monitor outcomes and adapt to the specific needs of many of the complex clients I have seen would not have been possible if I had only completed the 4 year training. My training was a Bachelor of Psychology with Honours at a University that has a large and very well-recognised Psychology and Clinical Psychology program. In summary, my post-graduate coursework and research learning continues to open my eyes as to how much more there is to learn and develop in effectively assisting people with mental health problems, particularly those that are more severe, more treatment resistant and with larger numbers of co-morbid difficulties and traumatic histories or developmental disabilities.

I have made huge sacrifices both personally and financially to undertake my post-graduate training to become a Clinical Psychologist and I am doing this in order to best help the people I will encounter over my career. To my knowledge, Australia is the only country (in which psychology as a major profession) in which a psychologist can become fully qualified with less than 7 years full time training. From my experience, I believe this training is necessary to help many clients. I fully recognise that not all clients require the full skill set that a clinical psychologist possesses and may only need more basic (but still very important) assistance with supportive counselling, behavioural therapy and practical support for instance. However many clients need more than this to improve their psychological well-being and be able to adequately function at work, home, school, within relationships etc. I believe it is unethical and detrimental to society to create an environment that pushes psychologists away from obtaining these extra skill sets and makes adequate mental health support less accessible in the community.

For these reasons, and many more not covered here, I would like to add my voice to those who are opposing the proposed changes to reduce the Medicare rebate for Clinical Psychologists to rebates in line with Generalist Psychologists.

Thank you for your consideration of this submission.